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# ISAIAH;

WITH

## NOTES,

*CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,*

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY

REV. HENRY COWLES, D. D.,

"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I except some man should guide me?" ACTS 8 : 30, 31.

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# PREFACE.

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THIS is the third in a series of Notes on the Old Testament Prophets: of which the first on the MINOR PROPHETS and the second on EZEKIEL AND DANIEL, are already before the public. A more extended Preface, and also, a General Introduction, appeared in the volume on the MINOR PROPHETS, and need not be repeated, it being presumed that most of the readers of this volume will have access to that. The general method of comment is the same throughout, the aim being to bring out clearly, yet briefly, the sense of the original.

The reader will notice that in the text italic words follow the usage of our English version, but in the Notes, they are emphatic.

It is hoped that another volume (JEREMIAN) will appear soon, closing the series on the Old Testament Prophets.

OVERLIN, OHIO, November, 1868.





order of that wicked king. That he lived into this reign is highly probable; the more so because while his earlier prophecies present him in contact with Ahaz and Hezekiah, the later (chaps. 40-66) afford no such salient points of contact with the living world, but rather indicate an author retired, perhaps like him of Patmos, dishonored and exiled, yet met and cheered in his exile with glorious visions of the future struggles and triumphs of his Redeemer's kingdom. May we not assume this to be the law of the loftiest prophetic vision—the martyr's exile and scorn without, but the communion of the Spirit and the foreshown glories of Zion, a fountain of unutterable joy and triumph within? As to Isaiah's later prophecies, this is a pleasing and not improbable supposition. So much only can be said of it. As to the manner of his death, the Jewish tradition is supported by Heb. 11: 37, and by a remarkable concurrence among the best Jewish authorities and the early Christian Fathers. It may therefore be regarded as highly probable.

Isaiah was not only a prophet, but also a *prophet-historian*—a prominent instance, under the general law, that the prophets, as a class, wrote out the historic annals of their respective times. He wrote "the acts of Uzziah" (2 Chron. 26: 22) and of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32: 32). The close resemblance between the two extant histories of the great Assyrian invasion, the first in 2 Kings, 18: 13, to the end of chapter 20, and the second in Isaiah, chapters 36 to 39, leaves scarcely a doubt that Isaiah wrote the former as well as the latter, and if so, then also, generally, the annals of his time.

As a prophet among his people, he blended true modesty with dignity and firmness. His bearing toward the wicked king Ahaz, as seen in chapter 7, witnesses to his boldness as the Lord's messenger, and to the high esteem in which he was held. Toward the good Hezekiah he bore the more engaging relation of spiritual father and friend. The king turned to him for sympathy and help when his city and kingdom were imperiled by the hosts of the proud Assyrian (Isa. 37); received from him on another occasion the solemn announcement, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," and gladly availed himself of the prophet's counsel and prayers through the scenes of trial



and of joyful deliverance that followed. The prophet stood between his king and the God of Israel—the Lord's messenger and the king's personal, religious friend and intercessor. Such a prophet must have enjoyed, in a very high degree, the esteem and love of all the good, and the general confidence and respect of even the wicked.

As a prophet, revealing the great events of the Christian age, Isaiah stands pre-eminent. He saw the future Messiah more clearly, spake of him more fully, perhaps we may say more sublimely, than any other prophet. Yet none other has given us his human relations so distinctly; none has spoken so plainly of his sufferings, of his death, and of the bearings of this death upon our life, pardon and peace. This feature is the more remarkable from the fact that some of his predictions of the Messiah are suggested by the overthrow of the great Assyrian horde; others by the foreseen restoration from Babylon—these triumphs of the ancient Zion becoming the analogy for setting forth the far more glorious triumphs of the future and spiritual Zion, to be achieved by her king Messiah. That starting thus with the idea of a mighty conqueror, he should also have seen that Messiah's triumphs were achieved by meek and patient vicarious suffering, and also by means of truth, justice and righteousness, renders them the more remarkable and by far the more useful to mankind and precious to every Christian heart.

As a writer, Isaiah has been justly admired in all ages. His superior merits strike every eye; touch every heart. Thousands have felt his power as a writer who can not tell why—who could not analyze its elements if they would—who could not name those qualities of beauty, fitness and force which all hearts feel. All must admit that he was gifted with transcendent genius for this very service—clearness of apprehension, imagination that never lacked boldness, and yet was always chastened; an admirable equipoise of faculties competent to sustain a standard of excellence always high and never flagging. Easily a master in all that belongs to ornament and beauty, he equally excels in all that pertains to clearness of thought and to force and strength of expression. As has been often said well, he is remarkable rather for the easy and natural combination of all the qualities

of a good writer, than for the special prominence of any one alone. Ewald, a scholarly German critic, says of him: "In Isaiah, we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Every thing conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no prophet, either before or after, could as a writer attain. Among the other prophets, each of the more important ones is distinguished by some one particular excellence and some one peculiar talent. In Isaiah, all kinds of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together so as mutually to temper and qualify each other. It is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him, as the symmetry and perfection of the whole." . . . "Both as prophet and as author, Isaiah stands upon that calm, sunny height, which in each several branch of ancient literature, one eminently favored spirit at the right time takes possession of which seems, as it were, to have been waiting for *him*, and which, when he has come and mounted the ascent, seems to keep and guard him to the last as its own right man. In the sentiments which he expresses, in the topics of his discourses, and in the manner of expression, Isaiah uniformly reveals himself as the kingly prophet."

Special note should be made of the state of the people and kingdom in the times of Isaiah. When he began his prophetic life, late in Uzziah's reign, the kingdom had been in the main prosperous for a long period. The two reigns next preceding Uzziah's; that of Joash, forty years, and that of Amaziah twenty-seven, were, in general, successful and vigorous, though each met with reverses, because of his departures from God, and each fell by conspiracy. Uzziah soon restored the national prestige and power, and bore the nation upward to a high position of military strength and of agricultural prosperity. The historic record briefly states that, "as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper;" that "God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians;" "the Ammonites gave him gifts;" "his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly." He fortified Jerusalem, raised a large standing army, yet cultivated also the arts of peace pre-eminently, multiplying cattle and perfecting field culture, "for he loved husbandry." 2 Chron. 26:5-15. Unfortunately

religion was less flourishing than agriculture and arms. There was not practical piety enough to preserve the nation from the corrupting influence of so much worldly prosperity. Hence, public morals declined, and the vices incident to wealth and abundance when enjoyed without the fear and love of God, became alarmingly prevalent. The writings of the prophets who were sent then and subsequently with the rebukes of the Lord, bear witness to the grasping spirit of avarice; to the growth of luxury, voluptuousness and sensuality; to the oppression of the poor; to the subversion of justice; to a fearful decline of godliness and to a consequent prevalence of idolatry.

Not only does Isaiah testify against these sins, but Micah, Amos, and Hosea also; the two latter indeed witnessing partly of the northern kingdom, yet somewhat of the southern as well, and all nearly at this period, contemporary with at least the earlier years of Isaiah. If we inquire somewhat more closely into the state of religion in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, we shall find that idolatry existed in its milder and less flagrant forms, the king and his court giving their influence for the most part in favor of the established worship at the temple, while yet they failed to suppress all the rites of idolatry. The historian says of Uzziah: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Amaziah his father had done" (not the highest standard), "save that the high places were not removed; the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places." 2 Kings 15: 3, 4. The same record is made of Jotham, vs. 34, 35. This worship in the high places was essentially idolatrous, though not always in the more flagrant forms. Idolatry had its gradations. Satan had artfully constructed an inclined plane leading downward' from the pure worship of Jehovah to the utter displacement of the very idea of God, and the substitution of what was no God at all. In its first stage the people might fancy that they were still worshiping God under the form of a graven or molten image. Thus in the worship of the calf that Aaron made, "he built an altar before it, and made proclamation," saying: "To-morrow is a feast *to the Lord*" (Ex. 32: 5). The mother of Micah, the idolater, said: "I had wholly dedicated the silver *unto the Lord* to make a gra-

ven image and a molten image," and Micah congratulated himself in his assurance of the divine blessing. "Now know I, that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (Judges 17: 3, 13).

The use of "high places" for worship was one section of this inclined plane, leading down toward the baser worship of idols. The mountains and groves being at first thought of only as pleasant and convenient places for the worship of the true God; the practice quickly degenerated; let in the rites of the heathen and then their objects of worship, and thus effectually displaced the true God. This earlier phase of idolatry was prevalent in the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. While these kings adhered in the main to the established worship of the true God in the temple, they yet lacked the piety and the zeal requisite to the thorough uprooting of those incipient forms of idolatry that were strongly imbedded in the "high places." Ahaz pushed with fearful strides down this plane into the most debasing forms of idolatry. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; made molten images for Baalim, burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire after the cruel abominations of the heathen. He not only tolerated the high places, but himself sacrificed and burnt incense there. He imported the gods and altars of Damascus, and even displaced the brazen altar of the temple and set up this Syrian altar in its stead. Thus he gave his personal influence wholly to promote idol worship, shrunk not from its most cruel and horrid rites, and discarding all confidence in the God of Israel, gave his heart to the gods of the heathen, saying: "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." The historian forcibly subjoins, "But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel." (2 Chron. 28: 2-4, 23.) For these great sins, the Lord gave him and his people into the hand of the king of Syria, who smote him and took a great multitude of captives; also into the hand of Pekah, king of Israel, who smote him with great slaughter, even "one hundred and twenty thousand in one day;" and yet further, into the hand of the Edomites and of the Philistines, "for the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz." In these straits, he sought help, not



from the Lord, but from the Assyrians. Against this the Lord, through Isaiah, protested, solemnly exhorting both king and people to return to God and seek help in him alone. If we may suppose that the prophecies of Isaiah follow the chronological order, chapters 7-14 belong to the reign of Ahaz. We shall now see how fully they are adapted to the state of the kingdom as developed in the history.

Hezekiah began his reign with resolute and noble efforts toward national reform. He put down idolatry and called the people back to their forsaken God. Plainly his heart was earnestly alive to this work. He had the wise counsels and vigorous aid of Isaiah, especially in probing the hearts of a corrupt people, in pushing the reformation deeper than the surface and beyond the mere forms of religion, even to the thoughts and intents of the heart. It was his great work to bring out and apply the transcendent motives of fear and of hope in the line of threatened judgments upon sin and of glorious promises of mercy to the penitent, and of good for the weal of Zion. In this work who has ever spoken more wisely or more forcibly than Isaiah? Prophetic burdens of judgment on other wicked nations contributed toward these vital objects.

It was in the sixth year of Hezekiah that the northern kingdom fell before the arms of Assyria, and its surviving population were borne away to their final captivity. Shortly after this the proud Assyrian king Sennacherib, approaching Jerusalem, with a vast army, demanded its surrender and the submission of the king to his scepter. It was a fearful crisis, but the king and his people sought unto God for help and help came. If we may account the prophecy, chapter 10: 26-34 as mainly historic in its localities, the Assyrian horde had encamped within sight of the temple spires, and their king was shaking his uplifted hand defiantly at the daughter of Zion, as one sure of an easy victory on the morrow; but in that eventful night the Lord's angel went forth among his sleeping hosts—few ever waked from that night's sleep! That surviving few fled with the morning light, leaving one hundred and eighty-five thousand of their comrades pale and cold on their camping ground! It was one of the great deeds of the Almighty! Occurring under the very eye of

Isaiah, he became its historian as he had been its prophet. He made it the text for more than one sermon of thrilling power to his people. It was a great central fact of divine interposition in his eventful life. The Lord wisely turned it to the best account in both prophecy and exhortation for the moral benefit of both the present and future generations. Some of the grandest prophecies of the Messiah's reign are built upon its analogies.

The latter portion of Isaiah (chaps. 60-66) demands special notice in a general introduction. This portion is designated as his "later prophecies," it being commonly held that they were written at a later period in his life than the first thirty-nine chapters. They differ somewhat from the earlier prophecies in two respects. (1.) They are more diffuse in style; more continuous in subject, passing less frequently and entirely from one subject to another, and make fewer allusions to current events. (2.) They are thought to present more cases of special and minute prophecy.

Comparing the later prophecies with the earlier, the differences of style are slight, while the resemblances are strong. On this point more will be said hereafter. In the earlier portion, the prophet comes frequently into contact with passing events—*e. g.*, in the reigns of Ahaz and of Hezekiah. He also prophesies of several adjacent kingdoms; *e. g.*, Egypt, Moab, Edom, Tyre, Assyria, Babylon; but in the later portion there is no notice of the reigning king of Judah and no prophecies of contiguous kingdoms, except the predictions respecting Cyrus and his agency in securing the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. On the other hand, in these later prophecies, the continuity of subject is remarkable, there being one main course of thought throughout the entire portion. Its central points are, God, the strength and comfort of his people, infinitely surpassing the gods of the heathen in both prescience and power; his people of the Jews, the faithful few among the many faithless, with their Messiah; all in some general respects, servants of Jehovah, and the Messiah specially and permanently so; their work, trials and successes; the gospel age, its nature, its mission, its triumphs, the calling of the Gentiles and the victories of truth in all the earth; the rejection of the unbelieving Jews and their exemplary doom.

This analysis of the themes in this portion of Isaiah will be justified and expanded in its proper place. The minute prophecies referred to pertain somewhat to the Messiah, but especially to Cyrus.

Of these two classes of diversity between the earlier and the later prophecies, the former has furnished the pretext and the latter the real motive for a very earnest and elaborate denial that the same Isaiah wrote the latter portion, who wrote the former. A large class of learned, and in some respects, able critics, mostly German, have very boldly claimed that the true Isaiah can not be the author of these later prophecies. The literary standing of these critics and the boldness with which they put forward this denial, render it proper to give their views a respectful and thorough notice. As already suggested, their minor argument, of very little force manifestly even in their own minds, is the difference of style between the earlier and the later portions of the book. The major argument, of chief force in their esteem, has for its grand premise that the author's central theme is the *restoration from exile in Babylon*—the whole portion being grouped round this grand event; that the writer speaks as if the later years of the exile and the restoration were his actual present, prior events being seen in the past; events not yet transpired in the nearer future. From these premises they draw the conclusion that he actually lived then and there, and hence that he was not the true Isaiah, but a pseudo Isaiah whose name and history are at present unknown. The argument runs thus:

Prophecy is simply a higher type of human sagacity. The prophets differed from other men only as being more versed in the philosophy of human events, and therefore more far-seeing into the future. Their prophetic vision was only shrewd, sagacious conjecture. Hence the prophets must have built upon their actual present. Such a thing, say they, as passing onward into an ideal present, years in advance of the actual, is simply absurd and incredible. The writer of the latter portion of this book must therefore have lived near the close of the captivity. Such predictions as those which name Cyrus as the great deliverer assume that the writer knew him as a contemporary, and had the sagacity to see in him the elements of a great conqueror.

In the words of Hitzig, the argument is put thus: "A prophet's prescience *must* be limited to the notion of foreboding and to the deductions from patent facts taken in combination with real or supposed truths. Prophets, like other men, were bounded by the horizon of their own age; they borrowed the object of their soothsaying from their present, and, excited by the relations of their present, they spoke to their contemporaries of what affected other people's minds or their own, occupying themselves only with that future whose rewards or punishments were likely to reach their contemporaries. For exegesis the position is impregnable that the prophetic writings are to be interpreted in each case out of the relations belonging to the time of the prophet, and from this follows as a corollary the critical canon that *that* time, *those* time-relations, out of which a prophetic writer is explained, are *his* time, *his* time relations; to that time he must be referred as the date of his own existence." Hitzig, pages 463 and 468.

This argument I hold to be false in both its premises and its conclusions. The premises themselves are false and therefore the conclusion drawn from them is baseless; and yet further, if the premises were true, the conclusion would still be unwarranted. The whole system is therefore radically unsound—false in the positions it assumes for its premises; false in the conclusion which it draws, even admitting the premises to be valid.

I. The premises are false, in as much as the author's central theme is *not* the restoration from Babylon, but *is* the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, around which cluster naturally, comfort to God's true people; their duties, trials and triumphs; the person and work of Him who was God's chief "Servant" and the great Captain of their salvation, the calling of the Gentiles, etc., etc. This point will be expanded and vindicated more fully in its place. The theory in question is also radically in error in asserting that the author speaks as one living near the close of the exile. Here let the reader note these facts. (1.) The prophet rebukes the people (chap. 43: 23, 24) for neglecting the Mosaic sacrifices. But a prophet living among the exiles could not do this, for the reason that the Mosaic system was then necessarily suspended, and by its own limi-

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tations could not be observed, since those sacrifices could be legally offered only in the one place which the Lord should choose, *i. e.*, Jerusalem.

Ezekiel, actually living with the exiles, never accuses them of sin in suspending the Mosaic sacrifices for the good reason that this suspension in their circumstances was obedience to God and not a sin. Hence, Isaiah does not write as one who lived during the exile. (2.) Again, the prophet (66: 3) assumes that the people were then offering the Mosaic sacrifices—which was not the fact during the exile—not to say that if it had been, the charge last above considered (chap. 43: 23, 24) could not be true. (3.) And yet again, the passages (57: 5-8 and 65: 3, 4 and 66: 17) arraign the people for the practice of various forms of idolatry. But all history shows that during the later years of the exile, the people were innocent of this charge. Hence, a truthful prophet could not have made it then. Moreover, since the theory in question denies all real prophecy, it forbids the supposition that these passages are prophetic of *future* sins of idol worship. And yet, further, a writer living then would not use such language by way of historic allusion to describe certain other sins *figuratively*, as being *like* these idolatrous practices; for his youthful readers could not be supposed to understand such allusions. In view of all these considerations, I insist that the author of these later prophecies does not speak as one who was living near the close of the exile. The premises assumed by the critics in question are certainly without foundation.

It is due to those critics, to notice the plausible if not strong point which they make upon the passages (64: 10, 11, and 61: 4) which speak of the temple as destroyed and of the land as "waste." "Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised thee, is burnt with fire," etc. These passages they boldly aver, assume that the writer lived during the exile. I answer, *not* by any means. For, (1.) The spirit of prophetic vision may have borne the real Isaiah onward to a point of time beyond the destruction of the temple, so that he saw and therefore spake of that event as past. Or, (2.) He may have spoken as Christians now do, in a sense simply figurative. In a state of great spiritual declension, Christians now may say legitimately, not in

the Jewish but in the Christian sense: "The ways of Zion mourn because few come to her solemn feasts." "Our holy temple is laid waste." If it shall appear that the context in these passages requires their reference to a period near the Christian era, the latter construction becomes strongly probable. The former answer however is amply sufficient for the argument.

II. If the premises as above stated were true, the conclusion would still be false, because prophecy is something far beyond human sagacity. In prophetic vision the Spirit of the Lord bears the prophet onward entirely beyond the limit of the most far seeing human eye, and gives him a new present; a stand-point in the remote future in the midst of events which God only could foresee. A single case—one out of very many—will suffice to illustrate this point. In chapter 21: 1-10, Isaiah records a vision which he saw of the fall of Babylon before the Medo-Per-sian arms—a scene then in the actual future to him about one hundred and seventy years. Yet throughout this narrative he speaks of what he saw as present and transpiring. He says: "My loins are filled with pain; pangs have seized me." "My heart *pants*" (present tense); "horror appalls me," etc. Looking upon this scene as then passing before him, his sympathies are deeply moved. He also sees the watchman set upon the city walls; he hears his report of the approaching invaders, and finally the announcement of the fatal result. This is the usual method or law of prophetic vision. It sets the prophet forward ideally into the midst of those future scenes which the Lord is pleased to reveal, by him, to men.

The more fundamental question—whether God has ever inspired men with prophetic visions—it is not in place to discuss here in a formal way. The incidental proof of it will continually arrest the attention of the candid reader of the prophetic writings. The book of Isaiah is a triumphant demonstration of the reality of inspired prophecy.

Affirmatively, my reasons for holding and maintaining that one and the same Isaiah wrote both the earlier and later prophecies of this book are: 1. *The internal evidence lying in the book itself.* The author's cast of mind, his poetic conceptions, his wonderfully bold, glowing, yet chastened imagination, his man-

ner of predicting future events, his style of poetry and his style as a writer, all combine to identify him as the author of the entire book—of the later as well as the earlier portions. As the world never produced but one Homer and but one Milton, so it never produced but one Isaiah. That two men should appear in history of such transcendent and peculiar genius, towering so high in their line above all other authors, yet so like each other that the great mass of readers see no distinction, and naturally account them the same man, is simply incredible. Even the fact of real prophecy is not more decisively supernatural. For, let it be considered, men of such surpassing genius are always original; are truly divine creations. No second Isaiah could possibly be a copy of the first—could never be brought out by any supposable amount of effort at imitation. The witness borne by the unsophisticated common sense of the masses is triumphantly decisive. Not one reader in a thousand, in passing from the former portion to the latter, would suspect that he was passing from one author to another. And this may be asserted of the Hebrew reader as well as of the English. In fact the main criteria of authorship are those great salient points of an author's mind which determine his cast of thought and consequently of expression and style, and which are patent to readers of average sagacity. The fact, therefore, that the masses who have read this book have seen no reason to question that one Isaiah wrote the whole, becomes a valid proof that he did. Again, of the fifteen other Hebrew prophets whose writings have come down to us, not one bears a hundredth part so much resemblance to Isaiah as the author of the later prophecies in this book bears to the author of the earlier. That is, the same Isaiah who wrote the entire book, has idiosyncracies of character and of style which no other Hebrew prophet shares with him—to which no other even approximates. Again, as already suggested, if it were a fact that some pseudo-Isaiah, living during the exile, wrote the latter portion, then the similarity between him and the real Isaiah in respect to cast of mind, style of thought and expression, would be a greater miracle than prophetic vision itself. Hence, those critics who espouse this doctrine of a second Isaiah for the sake of avoiding the admission of supernatural agency in prophecy,

have another case of supernatural phenomena to dispose of, not a whit less stubborn than that of prophetic vision. In regard to the peculiar and salient points of Isaiah's style, it is scarcely possible by any analysis of particulars to give the reader any stronger impression of the unity of the book, than a careful perusal will make on any appreciative mind; yet the following specifications may aid the honest inquirer. Note his boldness in the use of the figure which rhetoricians call "*apostrophe*," *e. g.*, invoking "the heavens and the earth." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," etc. (chaps. 1: 2 and 34: 1). In the later prophecies, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth," etc. (chaps. 41: 1 and 45: 8 and 49: 13). Note also one peculiar manner of predicting future events, not by simply affirming that they will be INDICATIVELY, but by commanding that they be done, or that the party in question *do* them *imperatively*. Of this sort, in the earlier prophecies, see chaps. 10: 30, and 13: 2, and 14: 29, 31, and 21: 2, 5, and 23: 1, 2, etc., etc. In the later prophecies, compare chaps. 44: 27, and 47: 1, 2, 5, and 49: 9, and 51: 9, and 52: 1, 2, and 60: 1. This list might be much increased. Again, observe how naturally his strong emotions seek utterance in *song*. On great occasions of joy, in view of inspiring truths, he calls for songs of praise, and sometimes gives the very words of the song to be sung. In the earlier prophecies, see chaps. 12: 1-6, and 25: 9, and 26: 1-4. In the later, chaps. 42: 10-12, and 44: 23, and 48: 20, and 49: 13, and 52: 9. And, finally, as an instance of somewhat minute figures, take his allusions to the potter and his clay; in the former part, chap. 29: 16, and in the latter, chaps. 45: 9, and 64: 8. Hence, the internal evidence becomes an argument for the unity of this book which can not be gainsayed. Even the German critics (*e. g.*, Ewald), who insist most strenuously that not Isaiah but some "great unknown" wrote the last twenty seven chapters, yet ascribe to him essentially the same qualities of mind and of style as to the true Isaiah in the first portion. This frank but inevitable admission is really the strongest internal evidence that the book all comes from one Isaiah.

The actual differences of thought and of style are easily accounted for. In this latter portion Isaiah has passed on beyond the scenes of the life of Ahaz and beyond the thrilling events of

the reign and personal life of Hezekiah. His external surroundings are therefore very much changed. Enjoying a serene old age, he lives far onward in the better days of Zion. But the man remains the same. The author, the poet, the prophet, the Christian—all are still the same. His conceptions of the Messiah and of the wide extent of his peaceful reign, are the same. Lapse of years, the influence of age and the great change in his circumstances, account amply for all the real changes in his style. Hence the inference comes with resistless force that the same Isaiah wrote both portions.

2. *The testimony of Jewish authority is unwavering.* The compilers of these writings, living far back toward those times, have given us the whole book as the prophecies of one and the same Isaiah. No counter voice has ever been heard from the Jewish fathers—*e. g.*, from those who translated the Septuagint, or those who brought out the Chaldee Paraphrasts, or who have in any way expressed the opinions of the ancient Jews respecting the authorship of this book. In any similar written productions, such testimony would be accounted decisive.

The legitimate force of this argument will be seen yet more clearly by supposing the theory of two Isaiahs to be true. Let it then be supposed that about the time of the restoration, a second Isaiah lived and wrote the last twenty-seven chapters of what comes to us as the book of the prophet Isaiah. This supposition may seem to be easily made; but it creates a demand for an answer to such questions as the following. Who was this Isaiah No. 2? What was his name? How came he to be a "great unknown?" Was he a Jew, living among the Jews of the exile? So the supposition must assume; but why has he no place and no record in Jewish history? How does it happen that his writings exhibit no traces of Chaldean figures and symbols, such as abound in Ezekiel and Daniel? How could such a man, so great, of qualities so commanding, of influence necessarily so pervading, live and die without making even a ripple on the surface of Jewish history? A contemporary almost necessarily of Ezekiel, certainly of Daniel, at a time when Jewish prophets were rare, were much sought for, and certain to come to the surface of society and of history, too; how can the theory be

accounted for, that one of the greatest of all Jewish prophets lived and died unknown to history? But even this is not all. How came his writings to appear in the accepted sacred canon without his name? How came they to be appended to the prophecies of the great Isaiah with no note or hint of their being written by a different author, living one hundred and seventy years later? Who perpetrated this fraud upon the Jewish canon; this fraud upon the Jewish nation and upon the whole religious world? Was this done by Ezra and his associates? Living so near this time, almost within this very age, they could not have done it ignorantly. They must have known all the facts of the case. Did *they* perpetrate this literary fraud upon the true Isaiah? Were they *inspired* to do this? Can any of the German critics assign any plausible reason for such a fraud on the Church universal and on mankind? Have they thought of attempting an answer to these and similar questions? Should they not be aware that the Christian feeling, not to say the common sense of men, will and ought to demand a fair answer to all these questions and to many more of the same sort?

3. *The authority of the New Testament is most abundant, and with all who accept the testimony of Christ and of his Apostles, is perfectly decisive.* Thus, Matthew (in chap 3:3) quotes from Isaiah 40: 3-5, affirming, "This is what was spoken of by the prophet Esaias." Again, (in chap. 12: 17-21), he quotes from Isaiah 42: 1-4, here also endorsing Isaiah as the author of this chapter. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet." John (in chap. 12: 38) ascribes to Isaiah the words found, Isaiah, 53: 1, just as in the next three verses, he credits Isaiah with another passage found, Isaiah 6: 9, 10. In his view, Isaiah wrote chap. 53 as truly as chap. 6, *i. e.*, the latter portion of this book as really as the former. Philip (Acts 8: 27-35) met the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah the prophet, and found the passage to be this very fifty-third chapter. Paul (Rom. 10: 16) ascribes the first verse of this chapter to Isaiah, and in Rom. 10: 20, 21, ascribes to him also the first two verses of chapter 65. And, finally, our Lord himself (Luke 4: 17-19) read in the synagogue service from the book of Isaiah, the passage standing, Isaiah 61: 1, 2. Did Jesus Christ and his inspired Apostles *know*

whereof they affirmed, or were they mistaken in attributing these chapters to Isaiah? Do the critics in question know more and better on this point than they? Is it even supposable that inspired men endorsed these as the words of Isaiah without being aware of their mistake; or that, knowing the universal mistake of the Jews in this particular, they did not regard it as sufficiently important to be exposed and rectified? Those who shall carefully and truly weigh all this testimony in support of the genuineness of Isaiah 40-66, will conclude that it cannot be ruled out or overbalanced by the naked assumption that the Infinite God *could* not, or, being able, would not inspire the real Isaiah to write what now stands in these last twenty-seven chapters. For the controversy comes in the end to this very question: *Is prophecy from God?* Those who admit this will have no question as to the genuineness of the entire book of Isaiah. Those who deny real inspiration have a stubborn witness to dispose of in this ancient document bearing the name of the book of Isaiah the prophet. Fair criticism has never impeached the unity of this book, and has never set aside, or rebutted its testimony to the fact of real prophetic inspiration—and never can. The testimonies here adduced from the New Testament show conclusively that, up to that period, no thought of a second Isaiah had yet entered the minds of men. In fact this notion was never broached until less than a century ago, in 1779-1780, by the German critic Koppe.





# ISAIAH.



## CHAPTER I.

It is neither easy nor specially important to decide whether this chapter was written first in the order of time. Opinions are divided between this and the sixth. The latter refers either to the induction of Isaiah into the prophetic office, or to his re-consecration to it as a special anointing that he might be the better qualified to go to an obdurate people. In favor of the prior date of this first chapter is the position it holds in the book, which we may assume to have been given to it, either by Isaiah himself, or by some other man inspired of God for this service. Against it lies the fact, that it appeals to the desolate condition of the country as then existent (vs. 7-9)—a state of things scarcely supposable in the reign of Uzziah, but corresponding better with the times of Ahaz than with the times of any other of the four kings under whom Isaiah prophesied. Very probably this chapter may have been simply suggested by these great judgments, following in consequence of previous great sins, and may then have been written as an introduction to the book. For it has the appearance of a general epitome of his prophetic messages—a brief summary view of the main points which they embrace. Thus, *e. g.*, here are the great sins of the people; the Lord's call to them to repent, coupled with his promise to them of free pardon; the calamities sent upon them, either in chastisement to reclaim, or (this failing) in righteous retribution to destroy. These are the points made in this chapter. They are also the points made in general throughout the book. Hence, this may be taken as a summary or chapter of contents, introductory in the sense of being a brief presentation of the subject-matter of the whole. This view of the chapter is now adopted by some of the best critics. Dr. Alexander says: "It is probable that this chapter exhibits a sequence of events or providential scheme which might be realized in more than one emergency; not so

much a prediction as a prophetic lesson with respect to the effects which certain causes must infallibly produce. Such a discourse would be peculiarly appropriate as an introduction to the prophecies which follow." This view, if accepted, practically disposes of our preliminary question of *date*, the chapter being written *for an introduction*, and yet not written first in order of time, but suggested by events in the reign of Ahaz, or possibly yet later.

1. The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

For remarks on the date of Isaiah, see the general introduction. This Amoz, father of Isaiah, can not have been the prophet Amos—the two Hebrew names differing from each other radically, not only in their last letter, but also in their first. The latter difference does not appear in the English, which makes no attempt to represent the first consonant in the Hebrew name.

2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

By "the heavens" and "the earth" here we may understand the prophet as directly addressing the entire moral and intelligent universe; or, more poetically, the physical material heavens and earth, thought of as intelligent and competent to hear and judge this pending case between God and his apostate people. The ultimate sentiment is the same in either construction. Of the analogies in parallel passages, some favor the former construction, and some the latter. Favoring the latter is this from Micah, a brother-prophet of the same age: "Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people," etc., (6: 1-2). Probably also this from Deut. 32: 1: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." More naturally in the former class is Ps. 50: 1, 4: "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." "He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge his people." This is like the convocation of the angels and of the risen dead for the final judgment, as in Matt. 25: 31. In either view the ultimate thought is that the ingratitude and rebellion of the Lord's people have outraged his moral sensibilities, and hence he must proceed to scourge and punish. But first, he will carry the case for a hearing before the intelligent and moral beings of his universe. These beings will, of

course, see the fearful inflictions which he is about to bring on his people. Let them first learn the grounds and reasons for these inflictions. "For the Lord hath spoken," is rather the Lord *speaks*. The scene is present. Hear what the Lord now declares: "I have reared up children," nursing and sustaining them from birth to manhood. The Hebrew verbs ("nourished" and "brought up") express the correlated ideas *to cause to grow up* and *to lift high in greatness*. From a single forefather, the Lord had built up a great nation. But even these children, so greatly favored and blessed, have rebelled against me. To all right sensibilities what can be more abhorrent than filial ingratitude in this strong form of rebellion against parental authority, disowning all obligation, even to a father! Essentially this very sin of cold ingratitude and rebellion against God's authority, charged here upon Israel, lies at the door of all ungodly, unrepenting sinners in every age and in every land, with only the difference of greater guilt in the case of the more enlightened. For, who of us all hath not been nourished and brought up as a child by our great Father above? Whose life has not been crowned by his loving kindness and tender mercies? Alas! that so many myriads repel the love that has so blessed them, and even disown the great Father who gave them existence!

3. The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib: *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

This contrast between irrational beasts and rational man is put with telling force. The lower animals know the hand that feeds them, and often manifest touching gratitude for the good they receive; but ungrateful Israel falls far below the ox and the ass. "My people" will not think of their great benefactor—will not recognize his favors or their own obligations! They persist in acting as if they had never known the living God!

4. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

The Lord having spoken in the latter part of v. 2, and throughout v. 3, the prophet here resumes, to express his feelings of amazement and pain at this horrible wickedness of the Lord's covenant people. "Alas, nation ever sinning, a people heavy with crime; a race of evil doers;" [fathers and sons for many generations]; children becoming ever-more, age after age, worse than their fathers by a perpetual degeneracy; truly they have forsaken Jehovah their God, disowning his authority; they have despised the Holy One of Israel, their own ineffably pure

and holy God; they have gone backward from his service in which their fathers walked of old.

5. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6. From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there* is no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

In the general course of thought in this chapter, after sins come judgments. The sins have been briefly referred to; here the record of judgments begins. "Why," is rather *where, on what part* of the body politic shall more stripes be laid? Where is there another sound spot, not already lacerated and bleeding under former inflictions? From the sole of the foot to the top of the head, no such spot can be found. All is torn and cut with the scourge; the wounds not healed nor even dressed and bound up. This strong description was by no means designed to represent these inflictions as cruel or excessive, but rather that the Lord had sought, with parental and thorough earnestness, to correct, reclaim and save his rebellious people, and especially that he had lost hope of success from any further correction.

Why should the Lord chasten this hardened people further? They are past all hope of reform. The Lord has applied most faithfully the natural means of curbing in and reclaiming wayward children. Let it never be laid to his charge that he has not done all in this line that he could! The people will revolt more and more. Their head and heart are utterly wrong, full of desperate depravity.

7. Your country is desolate, your cities *are* burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and *it* is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

8. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

9. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, *and* we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

This chastening has fallen upon them in the form of foreign invasion and war, laying their country desolate, firing their cities; foreigners ("strangers"), devouring the products of their lands before their eyes, and of course despite of their vain attempt to resist. The daughter of Zion (Jerusalem herself) is left solitary

and empty, like the rude and temporary shelter which the vine-dresser fits up in his vineyard for the few weeks which require his presence there to watch or to dress it. Gardens of cucumbers and vineyards were temporarily guarded thus at certain seasons. The rudest sort of protection sufficed for this purpose and then would be abandoned to stand alone and unoccupied—a vivid illustration of a ruined and forsaken city. But for a small remnant spared, her case would have been as that of Sodom, a symbol of utter and remediless destruction.

10. Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

15. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

From judgments, the discourse now reverts again to sins. The Lord himself is the speaker. The allusion to Sodom as scarcely surpassing the daughter of Zion in her fearful desolation suggests the further analogy between the two in crime and guilt. The Lord boldly accosts his revolted children as "rulers of Sodom," and "people of Gomorrah." What avail your many sacrifices? Of what use are they to me? I loathe them; I am disgusted and sick at heart of such worshipers! Who hath required this at your hands that ye should tread my courts so, in such a spirit, guilty of such crimes before my very face? The Lord could not say that he had never required the Mosaic service of sacrifices and incense; but he had never required them to be offered by hands red with the crime of murder! V. 15 puts this instruction upon these protestations of the Holy One against their professed worship at his sanctuary. To the same purport v. 13, which should be read thus: "Bring no more vain

oblations," (offerings void of heart, and therefore more than useless, even loathesome to God); incense ("of such sort") "an abomination to me; and so are the new moons, the sabbat and the calling of assemblies; I can not endure iniquity *and* a solemn meeting"—the blending together of flagrant crime with professed worship; wickedness *and* the solemn gathering of hypocrites into my sanctuary—the hypocrites coming with hands and hearts full of wickedness. It is unfortunate that the English translation should have missed this just and forcible construction. The unquestionable sense of the Hebrew is merely that their solemn meetings were an iniquity, but that God can not endure the solemn meeting when thus united with wickedness. When men come before God in worship, let their hands be clean of wickedness; let their hearts reverence and fear the Holy God! In v. 14, "a trouble," is better read *a burden*, corresponding to the next clause, a burden which I can not endure to bear. "When ye spread forth your hands" in ever so imploring supplication, "when ye make many prayers" in ever so much repetition and persistent urgency, "I will not hear," *for* (this the reason), those "hands are full of blood," stained with the murder of the innocent. How can God hear the prayer of murderers, their hands still reeking in the warm blood of their victims and no penitence for their crime being felt in their hearts? The supposition is that these men come to God with their prayers, incense, and sacrifices, to avert from themselves the punishment they consciously deserve. They come with these offerings as an atonement for their horrible sin, as if they could buy an indulgence, or at least a dispensation from punishment after the crimes by these acts of professed worship! But shall the Holy One of Israel disgrace his throne by becoming a party to such horrid crime? Will he take incense and sacrifice as a bribe to pervert judgment and justice? Never!

16. Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17. Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Reform! Change your life! The first figure, "Wash ye" comes from the previous conception of their blood-stained hands. Wash off those blood-stains by most thorough repentance and prayer for pardon, and henceforth keep your hands pure from crime and your hearts too. Let no evil appear in your doing even to the eye of the All-seeing One. Cease from all doing evil; learn by practice to do well; aim at real and pure justice for all; "seek judgment," every where. The clause rendered "relieve the oppressed," may be closely translated, *set right the cause of the oppressed*. Be sure that you befriend him and

him justice. Let no man's rights be ignored. Let no man be trodden under foot for his weakness. The fatherless and the widow, here as often elsewhere, represent the unprotected classes of society. God enjoins that they have the special protection of human law and the comfort of friendly sympathy. As men love God and hope for his favor, let them remember his helpless poor! Verily God is a great Father, and loves to take care of his feeble children! These verses, in their connection, express with great force the oft recurring sentiment that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice;" *i. e.*, mercy *before* and above sacrifice, and will never accept sacrifice or any of the mere forms of religious worship in place of the moral duties of justice and love to man, or as an atonement for their neglect or violation.

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

The beauty and force of these wonderful words are heightened by their connection. Though your crimes toward your fellow beings have been bloody and most revolting, and your sacrifices at my altar have been unutterably loathsome; and though for every reason, justice seems to demand your sudden and fearful destruction; yet if ye turn to become willing and obedient, ye shall be forgiven and blessed again most abundantly. Your blackest crimes shall be washed out and your souls become white before me. Know ye, O sinful men, that your God waits to forgive the penitent! Come, and let us debate this matter. Literally the Hebrew word rendered, "reason together," means, let us set each other right, let us interchange thoughts in the way of free communing upon the case at issue. Since God is infinitely superior to man, this proposed debate naturally falls into the form of *propositions* on his part, to be accepted on the part of sinful men. So here, God proposes, and urges the sinner's consent to his proposition. The great points made prominent here are, (1.) That despite of their awful sin and guilt, he is ready to forgive; and (2.) That when he does forgive, it will be with complete, perfect forgiveness, leaving no trace or thought of their former sin remaining in his mind. As said through Jeremiah (chap. 31: 34), "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Or through Micah, (chap. 7: 19), "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." How inex-

pressibly wonderful! Was ever love like this revealed elsewhere in all the universe! It was meet that these considerations should be brought before the minds of this sinful people as a moral persuasion to repentance. For the consciousness of great guilt naturally repels the soul away from God. The instincts of guilt will affirm; God can never forgive so great a sinner! *I ought not to be forgiven.* If my dull moral sense affirms this, how much more must the holy God! Hence, it is only with the utmost difficulty that these convictions of unworthiness and guilt ever admit the possibility of pardon so rich and so free. The guilt-stricken sinner can scarcely believe his own eyes when he reads such invitations in the book of God. The Lord must needs speak very strongly to make the desired impression. He must needs speak with exquisite tenderness lest his voice shall only alarm the convicted sinner and confirm his despair. But our Father *can* speak with inimitable tenderness. He does; and to his name be everlasting praises! Under this great proposition of free and perfect pardon, everything is left to turn on the sinner's consent. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Under the ancient dispensation the awards of good or ill for well or ill doing were present, *visible*, appertaining to things of this world; at least they were so in the case of individuals far more generally then than now. Hence, the form of this language "eat the good of the land," or "be devoured with the sword;" each a blessing or a curse to be sent in time and speedily. But the proffer of good to the penitent remains the same unto this day, only that the good is now in the main spiritual, and the evil inflicted for refusing lies over, chiefly, to the retributions of the eternal world. It still remains true that if sinners will consent to the terms which God proposes, will repent of their sins and sue for mercy, they shall "taste and see that God is gracious, their sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more. But if they only refuse every offer and rebel the more for all the long suffering patience of God toward them, they must be devoured in the end with a destruction that knows no remedy! The lesser retributions, made present and visible under the old economy foreshadow the greater retribution, future and as yet invisible which follows good or ill desert under the light of the gospel age. O how does it behoove men to accept the milder warnings of those ancient symbols, believe God's *word* not only, but his actual *deeds*, and flee from the wrath to come.

21. How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.



22. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

23. Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Again, the prophet returns to deplore the degeneracy of the times, the strange and guilty apostasy of the people. "The city," Jerusalem, represents the nation; *was* once "faithful," in the sense of conjugal fidelity in her marriage covenant with Jehovah. *Now*, how is she become a harlot in her idolatries; here thought of as adultery toward her Maker as her husband. That city *was* the home of justice; righteousness abode there, made the city her dwelling place, but now murderers are there. This indicates the fearful prevalence of crime in the line of personal violence. Her degeneracy stands forth under two distinct figures; apparent silver proved to be dross, and wine diluted with water. Since it is not in nature that real silver should become dross, we shall best take the figure as above; apparent silver proving to be only dross. V. 23 indicates that her rulers were specially corrupt, rebellious against God in the matter of their official duties, confederate with thieves encouraging their crime for a share of the plunder; accepting bribes for unjust decisions, and quite refusing to hear the cause of the fatherless and of the widow who had no bribe to offer. Considering that under the Jewish system, their judges were of the priests and the Levites, and likely, therefore, to represent the best piety of the times, these touches give an appalling view of the ungodliness of that age and of the fearful prevalence of depravity and crime.

24. Therefore saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.

Such wickedness the Lord can not endure. His responsibilities to himself and to his universe are too solemn and too weighty to suffer him to rest while such awful sin runs riot among his professed people. There is terrible significance in the expression, "Ah, I must *ease* myself by taking due vengeance upon these mine adversaries;" as if the burden of witnessing such sin, and of being in some sense responsible for its mischief in his kingdom, was too great for him to bear. It heightens the solemnity of this declaration that he makes it as the Almighty God, and especially as sustaining peculiar relations to his professed people, "the God of Israel." As if he would say, I can by no means shut my eyes to such sin through any favoritism for my own covenant people. Rather, all the more must I scourge, chasten and pun-

ish, for how can I bear to see earth's last hope of redemption through the church extinguished forever? In such an emergency, what shall be done by this great God of justice and retribution? Two things, as is shown in this immediate context He will purify by discipline: He will exterminate by judgments. The discipline for moral cleansing stands in vs. 25-27; the judgments that exterminate, in vs. 28-31. These two measures complete and exhaust his policy. Discipline redeems and saves all but the hopelessly incorrigible. These are swept off by resistless judgments.

25. And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

26. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called; the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

27. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

These verses describe the divine processes of effective discipline. "I will turn my hand upon thee," applying myself vigorously to the necessary correction: "I will purely," [thoroughly] "purge away thy dross"—the furnace and fires of affliction being in close analogy with the refiner's process: "and will take away all thy tin"—this word here comprehending all the base alloy. Restoring to the people judges as at the first, does not assume the conversion of her corrupt judges, but rather implies their removal to give place to good men as in her best days. Shall we infer that, intoxicated with power and utterly corrupted through the abuse of it, they were past being reclaimed, and therefore fell under the other form of divine treatment—the judgments that exterminate? Let their case be a warning. Under her new, upright rulers, Jerusalem shall be called the city of righteousness, the city faithful to her God and to her duty. Not so *called* as a thing of mere name or hollow compliment; no called so without being so; but, in the current usage of Isaiah called so because she *is* so and fully assuming that she is. Zion shall be redeemed from her sin, reclaimed to God and piety "with judgment," i. e., by means of God's infliction of suffering in chastisement for her sins. This righteous visitation of suffering shall avail to restore and save a part of the people, who thenceforward become the true Zion. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law" (Ps. 94: 12). Whole communities as well as individuals can testify "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word" (Ps. 119: 67). Our passage in its place in this chapter is a standing prophecy that God's righteous infliction of suffering

on his wayward children shall reclaim and save, at least a portion, a remnant.

28. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

29. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

30. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

31. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench *them*.

Here stands the doom of the incorrigible. In the first clause the word "together" does not mean that the transgressor shall be destroyed *together with* the sinner; but that the destruction of this one class, called both transgressors and sinners, shall come in close connection, "*together with*" the salvation of the penitent who are brought back to God by correction, as said in the previous verses. The same sort of infliction that reclaimed the "converts" (v. 27), hardened and sealed over to ruin those who would still "forsake the Lord." The oaks and gardens are spoken of here because of their connection with idol worship. These base idolaters shall be confounded and put to shame by the ruin that shall overwhelm them, both *despite* of all the help they can get from idol gods, and *because* they have impiously sought it there. The change from "*they* shall be ashamed" to "*ye* have desired," is frequent in the Hebrew—a grammatical anomaly and not necessarily a real change from one class of men to another. In v. 30, the previous allusion to the oaks and the gardens suggests these symbols of destruction. They shall be like an oak whose leaf fadeth, through disease and approaching death, and like a garden without water, which in an oriental climate becomes withered and desolate. So stated, the judgment threatened would perpetually remind them of the sin for which it came. The strongest of them (first and highest in official rank and power) should be only as tow in the flame under the visitation of God's judgments. "The maker of it" is doubtless the maker of the idol, since idolatry is before the mind, and the making of idol gods is usually made prominent in passages which speak of idols. The maker of the idol might think himself specially entitled to that god's protection, yet so far from being protected, he shall be only a spark, igniting the fires of Jehovah's indignation, or an electric conductor bringing down the lightnings of heaven upon himself and his fellow idol-worshipers! Alas for

those who will brave and defy the threatened judgments of the Almighty! What shall they do in the end thereof?



## CHAPTER II.

CHAPTERS 2-4 constitute one message, introduced by one rich Messianic prophecy (2: 2-4), and closed with another (4: 2-6). The intermediate portion details the sins of the people and threatens sore judgments. This prophecy affords no decisive indications of its date. Its location in the book favors its date in the reign of Uzziah.

1. The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

As in chap. 1: 1, so here, the prophet indicates that his messages were specially for the southern kingdom, Judah and Jerusalem. In the phrase, "The *word* that he *saw*," the seeing is only in the general sense of prophetic vision; in this case addressed to the ear, not to the eye.

2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

This passage occurs with no material variation in Micah 4: 1-4. It stands there in manifest connection with what precedes in the close of chap. 3. Here no such connection appears. It can never be known absolutely which of these prophets (if either) quoted from the other; or whether they both followed some previous prophet; or whether, if so, the original were purely oral, or had then been written, and all the rest (if there were more) has since perished, or whether traditional views of the Messiah, com-

ing down from earlier prophecies had chrystalized into this form of phraseology. It avails little to speculate upon a case where nothing can be certainly known, and where nothing of importance could be gained from the knowledge if we had it. It is a rich and glorious prophecy; none the less so for its appearing in each of these contemporary prophets.

"In the last days" were better read, "in the latter days," since the meaning is not necessarily, in or very near the end of the world, but rather in the age of the Messiah; in the Christian dispensation. Such is the usual sense of this phrase and of the analogous one, "Behold the days come," etc. They do not certainly locate events far down in the Christian age, yet this may be the sense here. The latitude of meaning which the phrase admits may be seen by comparing Gen. 49: 1; Num. 24: 14; Dan. 10: 14; Jer. 23: 20; together with this use by Isaiah and Micah. "The mountain of the Lord's house," the temple mountain, shall be firmly set in the top of the mountains, higher than all other hills, as if Moriah were planted on the heights of the Andes, the glorious Chimborazo of the world. Of course the thought here is of exaltation in human esteem as well as intrinsic glory.—"All nations shall *flow* unto it;" where the Hebrew verb *flow* suggests the idea of a river—all nations forming a mighty river and flowing up these lofty mountain sides to the temple of God on their summit. It can not be affirmed with certainty that Isaiah thought of this ascent to the temple as reversing the law of human depravity, even as his poetic conception reverses the law of gravitation; but the fancy, if it be such, is a pleasant one to think of. Human depravity has kept the soul of man groveling for ages, perpetually gravitating earthward. It will be a glorious change when the mighty attractions of the love of God and the upward drawings of the Divine Spirit shall reverse this downward tendency, and men by whole nations shall flow upward toward God's temple to learn his will and joyfully obey it.—"And many peoples," i. e., not many individuals, but better far than that, "many *nations* shall go and say, 'Come, let us go up,' " etc. The conception is, not so much that they shall be visited by missionaries and exhorted to seek God; but that, as if moved by some heavenly impulse, they arise spontaneously and exhort each other to seek the God of Jacob. They have heard of the Great God who set up his temple and made his abode in Israel and revealed his law thence, and now they feel a common inspiration pressing them to this fountain of all law and righteousness.—The next point is that law shall now proceed from Zion and God's word from Jerusalem for all the nations. God shall administer his government over them, rebuking their sins and securing radical reform. The instance cited as both proof and specimen is the cessation of all war; the conversion of its implemets into

those of husbandry, and the utter disuse of the study and drill which prepare men for war. In the prophetic conception human selfishness has so entirely given way to heavenly love, that men will no longer fear the recurrence of war and will therefore discard the doctrine, old as human depravity, "In time of peace prepare for war." They shall learn war and shall drill for it no more. Considering what desolations, moral and physical, war has wrought; how deeply its causes have been imbedded in human selfishness; and, moreover, what mischiefs have come of learning war; it must be admitted that this illustrative case bears in it volumes of precious meaning. If under the universal diffusion of God's law, war shall cease, so shall all other moral and social evils. The very heart of man will be renewed; human society will be regenerated.—This prophecy is quite in the strain of Ps. 72, showing that the reign of the Messiah shall be in perfect righteousness; shall abolish all oppression and wrong, and shall fill the world with peace and blessedness. Will that day ever come?—Let unbelief remember that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!

5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The spirit of this passage is: since we have a divine law so blessed in its results if truly obeyed, come ye and let us walk in its light. Since we have a future so glorious before our Zion, let us live as those who anticipate this Millennial peace; let us prepare for and hasten its coming! If Gentiles are yet to love this law and come *en masse* to learn and obey it, why not we much more? How happy for the people to whom Isaiah said this if they had earnestly obeyed this call! The context shows how far they fell short of it.

6. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

The logical connection between this verse and v. 5, is lost in our received version. The Hebrew, however, makes a logical connection, thus: I exhort you to walk in the light of the Lord *because* he hath forsaken you, and you need therefore to return to him to enjoy this precious light. Instead of two words corresponding to "therefore"... "because," the Hebrew has one and the same, which should be translated; Walk in the light of the Lord, *for* he hath forsaken you; "for" ye are full of men from the east, etc., the former indicating the reason for the appeal; the latter the reason why God had forsaken them.—Men of magic arts, magicians, soothsayers, came largely from the east. They

had then filled Judea.—“They please themselves,” etc. Gesenius translates, “They strike hands in covenant;” Alexander, “They abound with the children of strangers.” The latter is in the strain of the context and is probably the exact sense.—Heathen nations in every age have sought passionately, by various modes of divination, after some knowledge of the future and of invisible agencies higher than human. This seeking has usually connected itself more or less with idol worship. Whether so connected or not, it has been exceedingly demoralizing, debasing, and offensive to God.

7. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is *there any* end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is *there any* end of their chariots.

On this verse the exegetical question is whether it describes the sins of the people or their punishment; *i. e.*, their own luxury and idolatry, or the presence of enemies in war with silver, gold, war-horses and chariots. I incline to the former view, both because their sin is the topic in the verse preceding and in the one following, and also because, considered as describing their sins, it is in harmony with the Mosaic law. This law disapproved of horses for either display or war, and especially of silver and gold when employed (as often) in overlaying idols. See v. 20, and also Jer. 10: 4, and Isaiah 46: 6.

8. Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:

9. And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

The folly of worshiping idols is often put in a strong light by allusions to their origin, as made by human fingers, wrought with the skill and labor of men. See Isaiah 44: 9–20. Jer. 10: 3–16. Ps. 115: 4–8. O how do men debase themselves by offering worship to such senseless things and by putting their trust in such helpers! Here men of all grades, the lowest and the highest, go down in this debasement together.—The verbs rendered “bow down,” “humble himself,” might in themselves refer either to the voluntary debasement of these idol worshipers, or to the degradation to which God subjects them in punishment for this sin. It may have been the intent of the prophet to speak of their self-debasement in terms which would also suggest that God would himself debase them in punishment.—“Forgive them not,” is obviously predicated upon their being incorrigible, past correction. For such there can be no mercy.

10. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD and for the glory of his majesty.

Terrible judgments from God are thought of as already present, and the prophet exhorts them to flee for safety to the rocks and caves of the mountains, such as could be readily found in the hill country of Judea. It would be so awful to meet God clothed with vengeance!

11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

The idea is that men of lofty look and spirit shall be humbled, and the Lord alone exalted in this day of his visitations in judgment for sin.

12. For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low.

In the first clause the Hebrew would read literally, "For there is a day for the Lord of hosts upon every thing high and lofty," etc. The Lord is to have a day for humbling all the lofty things of human pride. *Things*, rather than "one" is the preferable term here, since it includes not only proud men and their pride of heart, but all the monuments and symbols of their pride, as the context proceeds to specify.

13. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

14. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up,

15. And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

16. And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

17. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day,

Cedars, oaks, mountains, hills, towers, walls, ships, and pictures, are here representatives of human pride. The prophet's meaning is not that all these things shall be literally cast down; but rather that the pride and the proud men that they represent shall be utterly abased.—"Ships of Tarshish" were fitted for the longest voyages known in the commerce of the age.

18. And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.



Idols shall altogether pass away; shall utterly perish. Their worshipers are now said to do as the prophet exhorted them in v. 10; go into the fissures and caverns of the rocks to escape the dread majesty of Jehovah.—The word rendered, “to shake terribly,” may more naturally mean to *terrify, to smite the earth with terror.*

20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

21. To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

The “moles and the bats,” are thought of here as burrowing in the ground and making that their territory. Hence things thrown upon the ground or hidden slightly beneath its surface would be committed to them. The word for “bats” probably means some other animal of burrowing habits, perhaps the rat.—The silver and the gold being of no account in this time of peril, the affrighted idolaters hurl from their hands their most precious idols, both that they may the more surely make their escape, and because they fear lest they shall be overtaken by Jehovah’s messengers of judgment with their idol gods in their possession.

22. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Why trust in man whose breath is in his nostrils and therefore is stopped so easily?—who may die so soon? For of what account is he? What value can you reasonably set on him? What can he do for you, when he can do so little with any certainty to prolong his own existence? In the line of the prophet’s thought, thus: Why trust in man whom you may see fleeing, panic-smitten, before the majesty of Jehovah when he ariseth to smite the earth with terror?



### CHAPTER III.

THE same subject continues through this chapter.

1. For behold the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

2. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

3. The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

The Lord will take away both the means of subsistence and the pillars of society, leaving the people to the sway of two great evils, *famine* and *anarchy*.—In the clause “the stay and the staff,” the Hebrew has the same word repeated, first in the masculine gender and next in the feminine, to indicate every sort of reliance. In the specification of leading men (vs. 2, 3) “the mighty” is one high in office; “the man of war” is a hero and warrior; “the prudent” is rather the diviner, professedly skilled in divination; and “the ancient” is an elder, not by age only, but by office. “The captain of fifty” was an officer who arose under the Hebrew constitution during the national life in the wilderness (Ex. 18: 25), and appears often, *e. g.*, I Kings 1: 9–14. “The honorable man” is in Hebrew he to whom men *look up* with respect, a favorite. “The counselor” was such by office. “The cunning artificer” wrought skillfully in wood or stone. The words rendered, “eloquent orator,” obviously mean one skilled in divination, in the whisperings and mutterings used in ventriloquism or in pretended intercourse with spirits. This class of men were no doubt much feared and probably were held in far too high esteem.

4. And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

As their rulers had been their corrupters and their curse, and as the people, yielding to such pernicious influences, deserved no good rulers, the Lord would make incompetent rulers their scourge, shaping this judgment so that it should be a reminder of their sin.—“Babes” in our version renders a Hebrew word which means *young children*, thought of as being petulant, saucy, disrespectful. These ideas are probably implied here and show that their rulers were not merely children, but children of the worst sort.

5. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient; and the base against the honorable.

In this state of anarchy and general disruption of social order, men will mutually oppress each other evermore, in selfish collisions; might, the only law of right. The young are insolent toward the aged; the despicable toward the honorable. Ordinarily the tone of deference to age in Hebrew society was ad-

mirable. The points made here would hence be to the Hebrew people intensely revolting.

6. When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let this ruin be* under thy hand:

7. In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be a healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.

The condition of the state is so bad that no man is willing to hold office in it. This is put by a special case. A man living quietly at home in the house of his father (*in* the house, rather "of" the house), according to patriarchal usage, is pressed by his brother to take the office of ruler, but positively refuses. The reason for applying to him, "thou hast clothing," implies that in the general destitution few, if any, could be found prepared to appear respectably in public. He denies that he has clothing or even food. How can he sustain the dignity of chief ruler? He will not take this responsibility of trying to restore a ruined state. These graphic touches indicate both the general destitution and the utter prostration of civil society and government.

8. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

This explains why the people are without bread, clothing, or rulers. Their words and deeds have been utterly *against the Lord*, contemptuously hostile and defiant.—"To provoke the eyes" is literally to torture, to occasion pain to his pure and holy eyes; the conception being that their tongues and their deeds had inflicted violence upon the sensitive eye of God, as if thrust into it. Surely the Lord would have us understand that he has keen sensibilities to the outrages of sin, and that he *feels* the abuse and wrong which the sinner perpetrates upon him. Is any thing more sensitive to violence than the eye?

9. The show of their countenance doth witness against them: and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

These are bold sinners, of shameless, unblushing brow and bearing. The expression of their countenance witnesses to their heart-sin. Their very face proclaims their sin, even as the men of Sodom had lost all modesty and made no effort to conceal their abominations. Woe to their souls, for they bring ruin upon themselves!

10. Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

These fearful judgments now impending will discriminate in favor of the righteous. If there were any such remaining, they have nothing to fear. "Say of the righteous, *it is well*; for the fruit of their doings they shall eat."

11. Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be ill with him*: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

In the first clause either of the two following constructions is admissible: "Alas! it is ill to the wicked; for the deeds of their own hands shall be done to them:" or "Woe to the wicked; all is ill (*i. e.*, to him), etc. The accents which give us the interpretation of very ancient Jews, favor the former reading. The sentiment is essentially the same either way.—Verses 10 and 11 are full of force, both because of their terseness and brevity, and also of their striking antithesis. All is well for the righteous; all is ill to the wicked. Each shall have his retribution according to his work. Doing well returns in good to bless the well-doer; doing ill recoils in terrible calamity upon the evil-doer. As the sowing, so is the reaping. The law of connection from seed to fruit is not more constant in the physical world than in the moral. Men must take the consequences of their deeds. This necessity is wrought into the very constitution of the universe; is apparent in the human frame; in the laws of mind and in the very elements of society; and is rendered doubly certain by the fact that the universe remains forevermore under the hand of its Infinite Author who is morally pledged to the most righteous retribution possible. If the laws impressed upon his universe could, in any extreme case, fail of making this personal retribution sure and perfect, his watchful eye would surely detect this failure, and his personal agency would forestall and prevent it. O would evil-doers only believe this and shape their course wisely! That they will not is in no sense the fault of God whose demonstrations of this momentous truth stand out every where in heaven, earth and hell, testifying, witnessing and proclaiming to all the universe, *woe to the wicked!* His latter end is only sorrow, the fruit of his folly and guilt!

12. *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.* O my people, they which lead thee cause *thee* to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

The first clause should be read as an address, "O my people," etc., for the same reason as the second, the Hebrew being the same in both cases. The "children" here are the "babes" of v. 4; really however young children, bearing a name which describes them as petulant, childish. Incompetent and bad ru-

ers are a curse to the people. Standing in positions of responsibility, they lead the people on to ruin, engulfing even their whole pathway and swallowing it up, themselves and all they have, as if a railway bridge were to go down with its whole train and freight of human life.—This prophecy of bad and ruinous rulers had a striking fulfillment in the series of kings of Judah who succeeded Josiah, pre-eminent all in weakness and wickedness.

13. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

14. The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

15. What mean ye *that* ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.

The Lord rises up to defend the cause of his people against these pernicious rulers. "The ancients" (elders) correspond here to the princes, both embracing the civil officers of all grades. The Lord's people are his vineyard, here as in chap. 5: 1-7. "Grinding the faces of the poor," assumes that they are already beaten to the ground and then violently trampled under foot there. "What mean ye to abuse my people so, as if you had never known that the Lord God of Israel accounts those defenseless ones his own special charge?"

16. Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

17. Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

From oppressive and incompetent rulers, the discourse turns here to the proud, luxurious women of Jerusalem: Because of their pride, the Lord will abase them. "Stretched forth" is stretched upward in lofty pride and scornful bearing. "Mincing as they go," is a movement with short steps, tripping gaily and shaking their chain-anklets to attract attention by their tinkling. For this pride and its offensive display, punishment comes from the Lord in the line of their sin. The hair being one of the chief natural ornaments of the female person, the substitution of foul and loathsome scab in its place is forcibly expressive.

18. In that day the LORD will take away the bravery

of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon;

19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20. The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings,

21. The rings, and nose-jewels,

22. The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

23. The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails.

24. And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty.

“Bravery” is simply *finery*. “Cauls” are caps of net-work. The Hebrew word is thought by some to intimate that they bore the figure of little *suns*, as the tiara or head-band had the crescent shape of the moon. The “mufflers” were vails, taking their Hebrew name from their tremulous motion. The “tablets”—literally houses of breath or smell—are thought to have been perfume boxes or smelling bottles, suspended from their girdles; v. 24 alludes to them. “Changeable suits of apparel” were their gala dresses, put on for special festive occasions. “Mantles” were the large outer garment. “Wimples,” according to the Hebrew word has essentially the same meaning. The word rendered “crisping pins” is now generally thought to mean a purse for money. The “glasses” were small mirrors. The “fine linen” was the tunic, or under garment. The whole group is significant of luxury, a passion for dress and display, all ministering to pride and to alienation from God. In v. 24 retribution is forcibly expressed by the antithesis between the former state and the latter, ornaments giving place to symbols of calamity and woe. Instead of perfume, a stench, perhaps with reference to the squalor and filth incident to captivity and dungeons. Instead of a girdle, a *rope*, for so recent lexicographers give it; significant of the bondage of captives. Instead of well-set hair, imitating turned work, *i. e.*, hair laboriously curled, comes baldness, the hair being either shorn as a disgrace, or removed by disease. Instead of an embroidered festive garment (“stomacher”) is a girding of sackcloth, such as was worn by mourners; and burning with both its pains and its disfigurement of person, instead of beauty. This in all its parts describes a terrible reverse of circumstances—a most fearful visitation of judgment for their guilty pride.

25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

26. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.

The men, brothers and husbands, are cut off by war; the city gates, representing the happy groups wont to assemble there, lament and mourn over the wide spread desolation; the city like a lone and desolate female, sits silent and grief-smitten in the dust. A touching and life-like representation of such a scene, appears on one of the coins of Vespasian, struck after the fall of Jerusalem before the Romans. A woman is represented in a sitting posture, leaning against a palm-tree, bearing the inscription "*Judea Capta*,"—Judah, a captive.—The first verse of chapter 4 properly belongs to this description and fills it out to completion.



#### CHAPTER IV.

THE first verse closes the description of the calamities brought on the daughters of Zion for their luxury and pride. Then the tone of discourse changes; the Messiah appears coming forth from God on the one hand, and on the other, born of woman, and so of the earth. The remnant who have escaped these fearful visitations of judgment, are purified by discipline and become holy; are also shielded from every danger and protected from all evil by this glorious personage. They repose under his shadow and find in him an everlasting and perfect refuge.

1. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

In the current sentiments of the Hebrew people, the love of offspring was intensely strong, and the reproach of being childless and unmarried was great, we should perhaps say, extreme. The case here stated implies that the male population had been cut off by destructive wars, as said in chap. 3: 25. Hence the usual numerical equality of the two sexes was broken up and the greatest solicitude was felt for the future welfare of society. It therefore becomes one indication of great public calamity that seven women (a large indefinite number) should take hold (earnestly, if not violently) of one man, saying, "We will provide our own bread and clothing, only let us bear thy name; take

away our reproach." This last verb is better in the imperative.

2. In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *shall be excellent and comely* for them that are escaped of Israel.

It is by no means futile or unsuitable to inquire after the laws of mental association by which Messianic prophecies are introduced. In the present case, standing in such close connection ("in that day") with extreme calamity brought on Zion in judgment for her sins and in discipline for her purification, the course of thought may be safely assumed to be of this sort. Yet, Jehovah never loses his love for his own Zion. In her deepest calamity he remembers her still with great thoughts of mercy. These very calamities are the seeds of blessings, sent with the benevolent purpose of purifying and saving at least a remnant, and so rebuilding his Zion in greater purity and moral power than ever before. Out of the depths of affliction some voices are crying to God, and he will surely hear their cry. His eternal purpose contemplates ultimate victory for truth and righteousness. Hence extreme depression becomes a crisis and pre-sages deliverance at hand. The law of prophetic association, so understood, becomes itself a precious guaranty of God's interposition to save in the day of deep distress, and also of the final victory of his cause and kingdom, none the less sure for the sad reverses through which his people often pass while under the processes of purifying discipline and stern judgment. Hence the pertinence of saying, "In that day," *i. e.*, at such a time, in such an emergency, help shall come; the dawn of day shall break forth upon the darkness of Zion.—"In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be for honor and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be for exaltation and beauty as to all of Israel who have survived," *i. e.*, the great calamities just before described. Whoever is meant by this "Branch of the Lord," he will be a glorious and beautiful object to these rescued people.—There can be no reasonable doubt that this "Branch of the Lord" is *the Messiah*, so called with reference to his divine nature and his origin as the Son of God. "The Fruit of the earth" is a parallel phrase, referring to the same great personage, but said of him with reference to his human nature and origin as one born of woman, and therefore coming up from the land, Israel; or the earth as the home of man. As to the figure, the "branch" should not be thought of as one among the many limbs of a tree, but rather as the one only shoot which springs up from the root and becomes itself the entire tree. The two parallel clauses give us the twofold aspect of his being; on the one hand his high origin as one who comes forth from the Infinite God, and on the other, his lowly origin and estate when he humbled himself to take our frail nature, and became as a shoot out of dry ground and men saw no beauty in



him that they should desire him. This conception of a shoot springing up from its root appears frequently in the Hebrew prophets. Isaiah uses various parallel terms and not exclusively this one rendered branch. Thus, in 11: 1 "a *rod* out of the *stem* of Jesse, and a *branch* out of his roots," but even this word rendered branch is a new one. So also in chap. 53: 2, "a tender plant, a root out of dry ground. But later prophets concentrate very much upon this word *Branch*, as may be seen in Jer. 23: 5; "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper;" also Jer. 33: 15; "I will cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David," etc. So in Zech. 3: 8, "I will bring forth my servant, Branch;" and also 6: 12, "Behold the man whose name is *Branch*." Thus remarkably the usage finally culminates in making this his proper name. No fact could more clearly prove an established Jewish usage of this term to denote their expected Messiah. This is the interpretation also of the Chaldee Paraphrast, one of the oldest records of Jewish opinion.—The additional and correlated clause, "the Fruit of the earth," is a rare instance in ancient prophecy of a joint allusion to both his divine and his human origin, and hence to his composite, twofold nature. In the New Testament, this distinction is made familiar by the frequent use of the phrases "Son of God" and "Son of man." Paul also (Rom. 1: 3, 4) speaks of him as "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," but also as "declared to be the Son of God with power," etc. The thing affirmed here of the Messiah, thought of as at first only a weak and tender shoot, is that he shall become a glory and honor, a thing of beauty and exaltation to all the escaped ones of Israel. From the most humble beginnings, he shall rise to the loftiest dignity, to be admired, loved, adored as the glorious Deliverer and King of his people.

3. And it shall come to pass, *that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:*

4. When the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

The special points made here are that these blessings from the great Messiah shall come *to all* the survivors of Israel; that their essential and most vital element shall be, real holiness, than which nothing can be better, and that this holiness shall come to Israel as a result of the washing away of her filth and blood by God's discipline, coupled with the power of the Divine Spirit.

"Shall be *called* holy," should mean here as in chap. 1: 26, shall really *be* holy; shall be called so because worthy to be.—"Every one written among the living," refers to the register of the living population, kept with great care among the ancient Hebrew tribes by inserting each name at birth. See references to this in Ex. 30: 12. Num. 1: 18. Ezek. 13: 9. Ps. 69: 28. Phil. 4: 3, and Rev. 3: 5.—"The filth of the daughters of Zion" refers to their sins as sketched, chap. 3: 16-24. So "the blood of Jerusalem" naturally refers to the bloody crimes of the people as in chap. 1: 15 and 3: 15. The idea is that the sins exposed and rebuked in the previous context are now entirely washed away. By what agencies done is briefly indicated in the words, "By the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning," i. e., by the Divine Spirit giving effect to providential judgments and to the fires of earthly discipline. See chap. 1: 25, 26.;

5. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a defense.

6. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Then the Lord will manifest his presence as of old in the pillar which was fire by night and a cloud by day to Israel in their wilderness journeyings (Ex. 13: 21, 22). This was to rest on every dwelling-place in Mt. Zion, every household and family and doubtless as to the sense, upon every soul, but especially upon all her worshiping assemblies—the Lord still delighting to honor the social worship of his people with his presence and blessings. The Church is now thought of as in general holy and therefore glorious. Hence the last clause of v. 5, "Upon all the glory," i. e., this glorious Church; "shall be a defense," protection. A second figure is "a tabernacle," a shadow from the heat by day and a refuge and shelter from all rains whether great or moderate. The Hebrew word rendered "storm" means a great rain. Thus shelter from earthly ills becomes symbolic of the most complete spiritual protection from the evils incident to a world of temptation and sin. Special beauty is given to this figure by the choice of a word for tabernacle which is very commonly used for the *bridal canopy*, thus leading the mind to the rich and charming conception of the Messiah as the husband of his Church, a relationship which signifies the most tender love on his part and calls for supreme devotion to him on the part of his people.

Comparing this Messianic prophecy at the close of this entire message with that in chap. 2: 2-4, which commences it, that

gives only a general view of the results of his reign upon the nations; this is a more specific view of the origin and person of the Messiah; of the holiness of his people, and of his special relation to them as Redeemer, Protector and bosom Friend. Both are precious, magnificent predictions. Let us praise their great Author for the light they give us as to the glorious blessings yet to come on the Zion of our Redeemer and on this sin-cursed earth. Long time already have the nations of the earth been his by covenant. They must yet become his by actual possession and by their own loving submission and obedience. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Ps. 2: 8.



## CHAPTER V.

THIS chapter is complete in itself, having no special connection with what precedes or follows. It opens with a beautiful parable of a vineyard, vs. 1-7. This charges the nation with unfruitfulness toward God, involving great national sin. The remaining verses sustain this general charge by numerous specifications of sin for which God threatens judgments.—The chapter contains no reference to time which can help us to its date. With great probability the sins specified were then present or quite recent. The judgments sent in retribution came by installments, distributed through a considerable period; some of them far down in the future history of the nation. The view given by Dr. Alexander is at least plausible and probably correct. "This chapter, like the first, is applicable, not to one event exclusively, but to a sequence of events which was repeated more than once, although its terms were never fully realized until the closing period of Jewish history after the true Messiah was rejected, when one ray of hope was quenched after another, until all grew dark forever in the skies of Israel."

1. Now I will sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

2. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

6. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

The persons of the drama in this parable should be noted. First, the prophet gives an account of his friend's vineyard (vs. 1, 2,); next, his friend himself speaks, summoning the Jewish people to judge between him and his vineyard, setting forth the leading facts of the case, declaring what he had purposed to do under the circumstances, and virtually appealing to them to say if this proposed course would not be altogether equitable (vs. 3-6). Then finally, the prophet gives the explanation of the parable, showing who are represented by the vineyard and who is its owner and the rightful claimant of its fruits (v. 7).—This parable aims ultimately to charge home upon the conscience of the Jews their enormous sin; but, with consummate skill, begins by proposing only to sing a song to a friend respecting his vineyard. Who would not listen to a pleasant song, an agreeable story? And when the case of the fruitless vineyard is fully brought out, who would refuse to act as umpire, so far forth at least as to pass and express his judgment upon the merits of the case? When the Jews had done this, they soon found that they had unwittingly passed judgment upon and against themselves! The final development of the parable brings home the application, "Thou art the man!"—Elsewhere in the Scriptures, the Lord's people are his vineyard, with reference to the careful culture he had given them, and the failure of the reasonably expected fruits. See Ps. 80:8-16. Jer. 2: 21. Ezek. 19: 10-14, and Matt. 21: 33-44. This last, a parable by our Lord, has points of close resemblance to the one before us, especially in the main feature of keeping back the purposed application until the hearers had passed judgment upon the case, and then showing them that they

had righteously condemned themselves. Singing this song seems to mean the recital of a finely conceived poem rather than any musical performance.—“A very fruitful hill,” not unaptly renders the striking idiom of the Hebrew, “Upon a horn, the son of oil;” the horn representing a crag or projecting cliff of a mountain—such as would, in that climate, afford a rich soil and fine exposure for the vine. Vineyards in that climate rejoiced in the hills. “He fenced it,” should rather be, “he dug it up.” As the mountains would of course be stony, he cleared out the stones. The “tower” was a temporary home and shelter for the husbandman and a means of protecting the vineyard against thievish men or beasts. “*He looked*” is more strictly, he *waited*, i. e., for it to produce grapes, allowing all reasonable time for his young plants to become rooted and to reach the period of fruit-bearing. But lo! instead of the best variety of choice fruit, he found only sour, worthless grapes! This raises the practical question, what is to be done with such a vineyard? The owner calls on the people of Jerusalem and Judah to judge in this case.—V. 4 makes two points: (1.) What is to be done to my vineyard, not already done? This is precisely the sense of the original. (2.) *Why* does it bring forth only wild, worthless grapes when I was reasonably expecting the very best fruit known? Then without waiting for the people to express their opinion, and anticipating the verdict of the moral convictions of mankind, he gives his own decision: “I will destroy both its hedge and its wall, and let in all the beasts upon it: I will doom it to become waste; I will throw away no more labor upon it in useless cultivation, but instead, will abandon it to briars and thorns; and finally as if he would suggest the exalted dignity of his person, he says: “I will command the clouds not to drop any more rain upon it.”

This incidental and quiet showing that the owner of the vineyard is truly the God of Israel is at once beautiful and striking. He is one who can speak to the clouds in tones of lofty command—and they obey! The secret is now out and the prophet has only to put the moral of the parable before the people in explicit terms. ‘*For*’ (as you will see from his authority over the clouds) the Lord Jehovah is the owner and the cultivator of this vineyard. His vineyard is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are the plant, the vine, upon which he so much sets his heart. He looked for justice, but behold only injustice; for righteousness, but lo, he hears only the cry of the oppressed—the outcries of the wronged and crushed. This indicates what special fruit the Lord expected, viz., moral uprightness and a fraternal bearing toward all fellow men. Especially he did *not* expect and could not bear man’s heartless oppression of his brother-man!—The points of moral instruction made prominent

in this parable are that God's gifts of truth, light as to duty, moral culture and opportunities for doing good, create peculiar obligations to be morally fruitful, to do justice and to love mercy. Men so blessed with privileges must be held to a stern accountability. Failing to meet this, they must expect that God will take away their privileges and give them to others who will render the fruits in their season. See the doctrine of our Lord on this point, Matt. 21: 43. "Therefore" *i. e.*, because ye yield no fruit unto God, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Does not this parable suggest moreover that there is a line beyond which God does not deem it wise to waste his moral efforts upon self-hardened sinners? Must we not assume that in his view the exigencies of his moral kingdom demand of him rather that he make sinners, beyond that line, an example of his righteous displeasure against their awful wickedness, and a warning to other sinners lest they venture too far in abusing the compassionate and long suffering efforts of their own Father to reclaim and save them? *It is a terrible thing to withstand God in his labors to save the soul!*

In regard to the striking paronomasia in the last half of v. '7, see notes on Micah 1: 10-16. The writer gives point to his words by choosing those which have resemblance in sound but are strongly contrasted in sense; as if we should say, He looked for the law of *right*, but lo, the law of *might*; he expected *good*, but lo, *blood*!

8. Woe unto them that join house to house, *that* lay field to field, till *there be* no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

9. In mine ears *said* the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, *even* great and fair, without inhabitant.

10. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah.

The discourse here comes to specific sins, and first, naturally, to the grasping covetousness out of which came that oppression and those outcries of the overborne poor which the Lord had found among his people, instead of justice and righteousness. "Woe to those who join house to house and field to field" as if they must needs own all that joined them; absorb the whole country, and so live in selfish, utter solitude! The curse of God falls on them! Those many houses, great and fair, are to be desolate, without inhabitant. Man may say, "Soul, take thine ease;" enjoy thy vast accumulations; but God is wont to respond, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

**Luke 12: 20.**—So much for the many and fine houses. The lands too are doomed to sterility. Ten acres in vines yield only about eight gallons of wine, less than one per acre. Ten bushels of seed return but one bushel to the cultivator. Of such land, under such a curse, the more a man has, the more is he impoverished! Such are the rewards of evil-doing! So God blights the oppressor!—It should be specially noted that the Mosaic law by no means favored this accumulation of landed estates. While it could not well prohibit all transfer of such property, yet its spirit was altogether adverse to it. The divine plan was that the various tribes and families should continue, age after age, on their original estates. If, through stress of misfortune and poverty, a man was compelled to part with his homestead, the law provided that it should revert to him at the Jubilee. Indeed its sale could legally be nothing but a lease until the year of Jubilee. The case of Ahab against Naboth, (1 Kings 21), shows how tenaciously every Jew held what he had inherited from his fathers. It also shows that the possession of overgrown estates must create the strongest presumption of rapacity and oppression. So the Lord regards it here, and hence his judgment on such men in the line of their sin, blighting the very good they had hoped to enjoy, and converting into a curse what they clutched and would fain hold as a blessing.

11. Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!*

12. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine, are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

The next woe falls on those who abandon themselves to sensuality in the line of strong drink, and luxurious feasting and music, to the utter oblivion of God and of all his claims upon his intelligent and moral offspring. This form of sin and its threatened judgment leads the course of thought through vs. 11-17. The description of their sin is strongly drawn. They rise early in the morning to follow strong drink, and are up late in the night inflamed with wine as men who make it their life-work to fire their blood and madden their brain under the perpetual stimulus of intoxicating drink. It is but a thing of course that such sensualists should give themselves to feasting, and should also superadd the charms of music. And yet more is it a thing of course that they should forget God! Ah, there can be no right thought or sense of God amid such revelry! One of the main purposes of such indulgence is to banish all thought of God. Especially (as the prophet here intimates) they will



not regard his work, *i. e.*, of retributive judgment on sinners for their crimes. They will not see the operation of his hand in its visitations of just punishment on the guilty. As to the works of God in the physical universe, they choose to ignore his hand and deify Nature. But the prophet here looks specially to God's works of moral government. The language seems to refer to Ps. 28: 5. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." What avails it for God to prolong their days when these days are spent from early morning to late night in the intoxication and madness of sinful pleasure? What avails it to lavish upon them the best and utmost of earthly good, to be converted only and wholly into agencies for worse impiety and madness? Why then should not the Lord "destroy them and not build them up?"

13. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: and their honorable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

Because they will not know God, my people shall go into captivity, yea, for the very sin of "not regarding the work of the Lord, and not taking notice of the operation of his hands." The ignorance of God referred to here comes not from want of opportunity, but from want of heart. It was not that they *could* not learn of God, but that they *would* not open their eyes and give their attention to manifestations which he made of himself before them. Hence his judgments upon the nation culminated in that most fearful of all national calamities, captivity. Starvation pressed upon all grades of society. The honorable were men of famine (so the Hebrew expresses it); the masses of the people were parched with thirst, with allusion perhaps to the straitness and horrors of siege—the presage of their captivity.

14. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

"*Therefore*," for the same reason as in v. 13, and in judgment for the same sins. To captivity and famine is now added the grave, rapacious and all-engulfing. By "hell" as here used, must be understood the grave; or more strictly, the grave for souls, in the ancient oriental sense—the vast under-world whither the dead were supposed to pass at death. It was usually conceived to be a place of darkness and gloom. See Job 10: 21, 22. The grave in our modern sense is too limited to represent



adequately the ideas of the ancient orientals. They manifestly thought of the souls of men, good or bad, as going to that under-world, though not each to the same apartment in it. The grave, just beneath earth's surface might receive and retain the body; a lower and quite other one received all human souls, where the wicked wandered in darkness, while the righteous in their apartments had rest.\*

In our passage this subterranean receptacle opens its mouth hugely, even beyond all precedent or limit; and "down into it go *their* glory (that of God's guilty people); their multitude and pomp, with every one who exults in it;" i. e., all those who profanely, impiously exult over the threatened horrors of the grave. In the original, "he that rejoiceth," stands closely connected with "*in it*," the last words of the verse; while the verb "*go down*," precedes all those words which constitute the subject of the verb, as in the translation above given. The sense is, the most blasphemous shall by no means escape. Making themselves prominent in their fool-hardiness, God makes them specially prominent in this enumeration of what goes down into that world of the dead. With this verse, compare Ps. 9: 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." The key to the full sense of such passages is given by Jude (v. 7), "Set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

15. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

16. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

All men, the mighty and the mean, the lofty and the low alike, are brought down, and the Lord alone is raised high in that day. The Lord exalts himself by his righteous inflictions on blasphemous sinners, and appears before all eyes as sanctified, pure, holy, and righteous, in his judgments on a guilty nation.

17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

\*The Hebrew *sheol* from a verb which means hollowed out, cavernous, is applied to an ideal subterraneous cavity, deep in the bowels of the earth. It should be borne in mind that this is the Old Testament word, and this, its Old Testament sense. In the New Testament a modified sense is given to the word Hades, which partially corresponds to this.

"After their manner" should rather be read, *in their pasture*. The whole country, bereft of its former inhabitants, lies open as one vast pasture field over which lambs roam at their will. The desolate districts where the few ranging animals grow fat on their plentiful feed, strangers (foreigners) shall devour. Other people from foreign countries come in upon the lands from which war and captivity have removed the Lord's people.

18. Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope :

19. That say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work, that we may see *it* : and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know *it*!

The next woe falls on those who sin with a strong hand. The figure, unfamiliar in our modes of speech, of drawing sin as with cords, seems to look to that powerful attraction for sin which intensely depraved minds exhibit. They are *magnets*, drawing every sort of sin toward themselves; or a vast *maelstrom* into which all forms of wickedness are sucked down. They never come into the presence of sin but they draw it to themselves, "drinking in iniquity like water," taking to it as if no sin could be incongenial or unwelcome to their sin-loving souls. —By "cords of vanity," I do not understand here (as some have) slight and slender cords, in antithesis with cart-ropes; but rather, cords of sin, corresponding to "bands of love," as in Hos. 11: 4; or, as some have suggested, cords that draw with the power of false reasoning, fallacies and false philosophies. "Sin" in the last clause is parallel with "iniquity" in the first—a noun and not a verb. Both are said to be "*drawn*." But the style of sinning here contemplated is fully given in the next verse, where their spirit stands out in their supposed words: "Let him" (God) make speed and hasten his work (of threatened judgment) that we may see it—"we would like to see what he can do!") and let the Holy One of Israel (said contemptuously, in bitter scorn) draw nigh and come that we may know" (him). "You threaten his coming: let him come! Let us know him. Who fears?"—This strain of impious and horrid blasphemy implies an utter incredulity, or the very extreme of fool-hardiness. No human line ever yet fathomed the mysteries of sin-madness; the depths of moral infatuation to which depravity in sinning creatures, human and satanic, can sink. In any rational point of light, it seems in the last degree amazing that men should dare the Almighty to vengeance, and heap insults on his name and throne after this manner; but who shall say what the folly and guilt of sin cannot do? Men of this spirit draw all sorts of sin into their souls as if they were eager to be filled with sin to their utmost capacity! "Evil, be

thou my good," say they; and having thus chosen their pleasure, they glory in being bold to pursue this course in contempt of all fear, and in defiance of the Almighty! Alas, what infatuation!

20. Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Only a slight shade of distinction separates between this style of sinners and those last described. These would seem to have some little respect remaining for the *names* of goodness. Those reveal no trace of even this. Hence these men—loving sin, and fully purposed to have and to enjoy it—would fain give it a good name, so that their life and heart shall seem less black to themselves, and especially shall be less odious to others. This reversal of moral terms and this consequent breaking down of moral distinctions, this calling evil good and good evil, is one of the most common devices of respectable sinning. It is really the testimony which wicked men unconsciously bear to the intrinsic merit and the consequent respectability of goodness. This they can not yet altogether ignore, and therefore they very earnestly wish they might manage to have the credit of goodness, though they have none of the reality. If all mankind would only join them in baptizing wickedness with good names so that they could go on in all desirable sinning and yet have it accounted as righteousness; if they could have all the good they seek in sin, and with it the reputation of virtue and goodness besides, it would be "a consummation most devoutly to be wished!" So they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Taxing their sophistry to the utmost, constraining the public sentiment of society to their own purposes, and often, alas! with fearful success, they manage to lessen materially the discomforts of sinning, and to smooth the matter over to their own consciences. For, strange to say, the consciences of hardened sinners are not much given to close moral scrutiny into their own guilt. Hence they readily conform to a public sentiment which they have themselves warped to call evil good and good evil. It is appalling to notice how prevalent this policy becomes in communities which are brought somewhat under the sentiment of general respect for sound morality and pure Christianity.

21. Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

A woe on men puffed with self-conceit, too wise in their own fancies to learn wisdom from other men, or even from God.

22. Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Strong drink has been introduced before (v. 11); there, as associated with revelry, feasting, and utter forgetfulness of God. Here, it appears in men who hold official positions, and who, under the pernicious stimulus of strong drink, accept bribes to acquit the wicked and condemn the righteous. The description is full of force—men mighty to drink wine; men of strength to mingle strong drink; who make their liquor fearfully strong with intoxicating ingredients and then drink with their might. For men out of office and bearing no public responsibility, it is bad enough to manifest such strength in the ways of the drunkard's madness: how much worse when the sacred interests of justice in the civil courts must suffer, and all legal restraint on crime be sacrificed! Men who indulge in strong drink are utterly incapacitated to bear the sacred trusts of public justice. Such indulgence evinces a lack of moral stamina and aggravates it yet more.

24. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

The destructive judgments of God on all these sinners stand forth here in symbols of awful power. As fire devours the stubble, and as chaff, touched with flame, sinks down into ashes [the sense of the Hebrew], so their root shall be as rottenness and all their "blossom" (rather, the whole body of their plant above ground—the word being antithetic to the *root*, and comprising all the rest,) shall pass off in the air as mere dust. So shall their glory disappear!—The sins assigned as the cause are essentially those on which the woes of this chapter had been denounced, viz., casting away God's law and treating with contempt the word and authority of the Holy One of Israel.

25. Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he has stretched forth his hand against them, and has smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses *were* torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

The verbs throughout this verse are in the past tense, indicating that the events are past. If not past as to the prophet's actual present, they were so from his ideal stand-point.—The "trembling of the hills" indicates the appalling majesty of these inflictions of divine judgment.—Instead of "torn," the best critics read, Their carcasses were as filth cast out in the public streets, left unburied in places of chief resort—a doom always accounted by the ancients as the worst calamity possible to men.—Inasmuch as these terrible inflictions prove unavailing, the indignation of the Lord ceases not, nor does he withdraw his rod, but still stretches forth his hand for yet more inflictions.

26. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

27. None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

28. Whose arrows *are* sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind:

29. Their roaring *shall be* like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

30. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if *one* look into the land, behold darkness *and* sorrow; and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Here a foreign foe of fearful power appears as the scourge of the nation. How God calls them to this work is indicated by two figures; the lifting up of a banner around which they are to rally and which they follow; and the hiss or whistle used to call swarming bees home to their hives. With grand sublimity of description, this whistle call is heard from afar across the broad earth, and lo! they come, very swiftly, to fulfil their mission. Such is the power of Almighty God over even heathen nations who neither know or fear his name!—The vigor of this enemy is put strongly. The girdle loose, impedes the free use of the limbs; but the girdle of these warriors is never loosed: their shoe-latchet never broken; their arrows always sharp, and their bows trodden for a shot; their horses' hoofs tough as flint (a very important quality before iron shoes were

known); their wheels dashing like a whirlwind; their war-shout like the lion's roar:—all the features are intensely strong, and the whole scene terrible.—As the lion having seized his prey and made his first meal from it, deposits the rest where he will, for future use; so this foreign foe has everything his own way and none can rescue from his grasp.—The last touch is graphic. If one looks toward that land, behold! only darkness and sorrow: dense clouds hang deeply over it: all the great lights are darkened in its heavens! The pall of death has fallen and enshrouded the land!—So ends this vivid portrayal of the nation's sins and judgments.—As to its fulfillment, many points correspond to the captivity by the Chaldeans; some better to the final destruction by the Romans. Like Deut. 28, this chapter portrays the fearful judgments held in reserve against the hour when the nation's sins should imperatively demand their infliction, forbearance and further discipline being in vain.



## CHAPTER VI.

THE prophet sees the Lord in his effulgent glory and is overwhelmed with awe and a sense of uncleanness and unfitness for his work. The Lord indicates by symbols that his sins are forgiven, and commissions him to go to the people.—A question arises here whether this was or was not the prophet's inauguration into the prophetic office. Either supposition is possible. In favor of the former is the fact that there is no other notice of his primary call and induction and that these circumstances are appropriate to such a transaction.—In favor of the latter is the location of this chapter in his book, not the first, but the sixth—a fact not easily accounted for if this were the beginning of his prophetic life: also a slight (not decisive) indication in v. 5, that he had been prophesying among that people before; and finally, the special fitness of a renewed commission in view of the hopeless obduracy of the people. On the whole I incline to the latter supposition, viz., that the prophet had been in his work before, and that this is a renewal of his consecration and commission.

1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

The scene of this manifestation of the Lord to his prophet was in the temple. It avails nothing for us to inquire whether it was made to the eye of his body or only to the eye of his mind. He doubtless states the case as it appeared to him. He *seemed*

o himself to see, yet very probably he could not have decided whether he saw with the eye of the body or with the eye of his mind only. The Lord sat on a lofty throne and the train of his robe filled the temple. The word "also" ("I saw *also* the Lord,") is incorrect, the Hebrew words signifying only that then, at the time mentioned, I saw, etc.—It is appropriate here to raise the question *who* is meant by "the Lord" in this vision? I accept most decidedly the current opinion of Christian commentators that this personage is none other than the Son of God, the same who subsequently became incarnate, but who, at various points during the ages before his human birth, anticipated in a sort this more permanent incarnation by making himself visible to his ancient servants. Of this, the Apostle John is one of the witnesses. Referring to the scenes and words of this very chapter, he wrote (John 12: 41), "These things said Esaias when he saw his (Christ's) glory, and spake of him." That this same personage conducted Israel through the wilderness is clear from the Divine attributes ascribed to "the angel" (so called) in the promise recorded Ex. 23: 20-23: "He will not pardon your transgressions, *for my name is in him.*" So the angel who appeared to Manoah and his wife (Judges 13), bears one of the names attributed to the Messiah in Isaiah 9: 6, "Wonderful;" but unfortunately rendered (Judges 13: 18) "secret." The Hebrew has the same name in both cases. Other considerations concur to establish the general doctrine that when God was specially revealed to human view in the old Testament, it was in the person of his Son who in the fullness of time became permanently incarnate.

2. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

The seraphim are in Hebrew the *burning ones*, with reference probably to the energy and purity of their exalted natures. It is also supposable that they appeared in this vision invested with the radiance and glory of fire, symbolic of the leading qualities of their character. They are manifestly intelligent, sustaining relations in the universe of God analogous to those of the holy angels. Whether they constitute an order of beings entirely distinct from those who are called angels we have no means of knowing.—With one pair of wings each covered his face in humble reverence: with another, his feet, for the same reason. They stood above "it," the throne, attendant ministers before the ineffably Glorious One, enthroned there.

3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.



It is not said how many seraphim there were. The language necessarily implies the presence of only two. But there may have been many more.—The epithet "Holy" is proclaimed thrice, either for the greater emphasis, or with allusion to the three persons of the Godhead. The latter would be scarcely probable were there not other allusions in this chapter to this distinction of persons. These will be noticed in their place. As already intimated, the Lord, here revealed to the prophet as sitting on his glorious throne, must be the Son of God.—Not this temple only, as you now see it, but all the earth is (and is to be) filled with his glory. None the less but really all the more for the obduracy of the Israel then present will the Messiah reveal his glory, vindicating his righteous justice, testifying to his abhorrence of sin, to the deep benevolence of his own heart, and to the terrible malignity of sin in the hearts of depraved men.—A similar declaration appears in Num. 14:21, on the occasion of the murmuring after the report of the unbelieving spies. "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.".... "Because all those men who have seen my glory and my miracles in Egypt," etc., "*shall not see the land of which I swore unto their fathers.*" Their righteous exclusion from Canaan, their being cut down by a long series of providential judgments during forty years of wandering in the wilderness, made revelations of God's glory that might well go abroad through all the earth. Much the same sentiment is expressed by Habakkuk, prophetically forecasting the doom of proud, oppressive Babylon (Hab. 2:13, 14). "Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor" (not "in," but) *for* the very fire, rearing lofty walls with the coerced labor of whole subject nations, but rearing them only for the fire of God's judgments to consume? "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters fill the seas." Not only shall this glory fill the earth, *i. e.*, in fact, and so that the seraphim might see it; but men everywhere shall know it; the *knowledge* of it shall fill all the earth.—Brighter yet in its certain reference to the pacific reign of Immanuel is the recurrence of almost these identical words in Isaiah 11:9, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Here this knowledge of God's glory takes effect on human selfishness; subdues all animosity and hate, and bathes all hearts in mutual love and peace. None shall hurt or destroy throughout all God's holy mountain, and his Zion will then have overspread and embraced the world, for the knowledge of the Lord himself is every where and can not fail to produce these transforming moral results.—A like close analogy obtains between this passage considered as contemplating the great future of Messiah's kingdom, and the



prayer which closes the 72d Psalm, another distinguished prophecy of the Messiah. "His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: *and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen!*" (Ps. 72: 17-19.)—This prophecy of the far spreading glory of the Messiah's reign, considered as coming from the lips of the seraphim, those burning messengers from before the heavenly throne, has exquisite beauty, sublimity and force. It opens the vista of Messiah's future kingdom as seen with their eye and from their point of view. No wonder such a theme should touch their lips with hallowed fire, and enkindle the utmost ardor of their souls!

4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

The "posts of the door" are rather the "bases of the threshold." The very foundations of the temple themselves shake under the awe-inspiring cry. The temple was filled with smoke, either as indicating the presence of fire, or to veil the otherwise too appalling manifestations of divine glory.

5. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Throughout the more ancient Scriptures, we find traces of the thought that none could see the face of God and live. Earliest in Jacob's words at Peniel, where he speaks of it as a wonder: "For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved!" There would seem to have been special occasion for this impression in God's own words to Moses (Ex. 33: 20). "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." Other traces of this feeling appear, Deut. 5: 24-26, and Judges 6: 22, 23, and 13: 22, 23. In the case before us, the prophet's awe and terror are manifestly heightened by a deep sense of uncleanness, involving, it would seem, conscious guilt. "Woe is me," he cries out, "for I am undone," ruined; for I have been speaking the words of God to men; but alas! with what unclean lips! And the people with whom I have been conversant—alas! what unclean lips have they! Ah me! I had not known the ineffable purity and glory of this Great King, the Lord Jehovah of hosts!"—It will be noticed that this paraphrase assumes that Isaiah had been already ministering in his prophetic office. This can not perhaps be assumed with absolute certainty, yet must be accounted as probable, since it better accounts for the apparent consciousness of guilt in previous imperfect ministrations. It also accounts bet-

ter for the allusion to the unclean lips of the people.—The case suggests that in this experience Isaiah stands not alone. Other ministers of the Lord have, doubtless, been speaking professedly for God with a sadly imperfect sense of his unutterable purity and glory, and with only a dim view and a slight sense of their own uncleanness. Ah, might they but see the glory of the Lord of hosts as seen by this ancient prophet! Would they not cry out for such a manifestation of divine mercy as that which came to take off the burden from his heart and to anoint his soul with fresh and heavenly unction?

6. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7. And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

The words rendered a "live coal," seem rather to mean "a hot stone," yet this change does not affect the general sense. The altar is symbolic of propitiation, atonement for sin. The Lord graciously hears the prophet's prayer and gives him this assurance of pardon. It was timely, tender, melting, and manifestly brought with it a precious anointing for his future work.—We may note the relation of fitness between the character of the seraphim (*burning ones*), and the taking up of a hot stone from the burning altar to apply it to the lips of the prophet. It would seem to indicate a baptism of the prophet into the same spirit of purity and energy which gave name and character to the seraphim.

8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

Instead of "also," the better rendering would be, "and *then* I heard" etc.—The Lord has messages for his people and needs a messenger to bear them. Instead of calling Isaiah by name, he makes the call general; "*Whom* shall I send?" as if to give any or all of his servants an opportunity to volunteer. Isaiah, now sweetly assured of pardon and touched with gratitude for the relief it brought to his burdened soul and for the luxury of its blessedness, promptly responds, "Here am I, send me." Shall we not take this as a precious example of what should always be the fruit of a conscious sense of forgiveness? Shall we be forgiven much, and yet not love much? Does it not behoove every pardoned sinner to be ready and joyful to do much and to suffer much for Him who hath *so* loved and *so* forgiven?—We must notice the striking peculiarity of the plural form, "Who will go for *us*?" placed here in the parallel clause with "Whom

shall *I* send?" "*I*" in the first form of the question becomes "*us*" in the second. There should be some good ground for this close relationship. None has ever been assigned; it is safe to say that none can be, more plausible and probable than that which assumes a reference to the trinity of persons in the one God.—This view has the endorsement of both John and Paul. John recognizes the Son as here revealing his glory to his prophet (John 12: 41): "These things said Esaias when he saw his glory and spake of him;" and Paul (Acts 28: 25,) with equal clearness recognizes the presence and agency of the Spirit in these scenes. "*Well spake the Holy Ghost* by Esaias the prophet, saying," as here in vs. 9, 10.

9. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Here the prophet receives his message. In v. 9 he is told what to *say*; in v. 10 what to *do*, or more strictly what should be the *effect* of his labor. The passage is peculiar in its form of statement, and therefore should be considered carefully. In v. 9 we can by no means take these imperatives in their direct sense as forbidding the people to understand and perceive what God is saying. They must therefore be taken as solemn irony, so put in the hope of arousing their dull hearts to serious thought. "Go on hearing, since so you choose and will: go on hearing and not understanding; go on to see and yet perceive nothing." Alas! you will find ere long to your bitter cost that such a course is fraught with ruin and death! Why will ye madly pursue it? Our Lord seems to speak in the same way in Matt. 23: 32, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."—V. 10 is addressed to the prophet, and like v. 9, is to be taken, not in a direct but in a modified sense; not as enjoining him to aim and labor to harden the hearts of the people and make their hearing dull and their seeing dim or unavailing; but as indicating what must be the incidental *results* of his best and holiest endeavors. "Go and deliver my messages to this people. They have resisted my call hitherto; they will again. Thus far they have shut their ears and closed their eyes; you need expect no better hearing and seeing from them hereafter. Despite of your most tender and earnest appeals, they will cleave to their sins; they will repel your invitations; scorn your entreaties; mock at the threatenings you proclaim, and press on in the way of rebellion and moral ruin. It is their set purpose, and they will persist in

it to their certain death. The Spirit of the Lord has pressed them long and kindly, but with no good result, and now they must be made a terrible example of the ruin that comes on those who will "always resist the Holy Ghost."—This strong case, strongly stated, of moral obduracy of heart and of judicial visitation from God, manifestly made a strong impression upon at least the good men of the nation in future ages. We have proof of this in the fact that these verses are referred to by quotations more or less full in at least six passages in the New Testament. See Matt. 13: 14. Mark 4: 12. Luke 8: 10. John 12: 40. Acts 28: 26. Rom. 11: 8.—Our Lord's use of it in the discussion which grew out of his parable of the sower (as in Matthew, Mark and Luke) was entirely in harmony with its drift and purpose as it stands here in Isaiah, i.e., illustrative of that judicial blindness to which God leaves sinners who resist his Spirit and set at nought his merciful endeavors to enlighten and save them.—The phraseology of Matthew (13: 14) and of Paul (Acts 28: 26) is slightly modified from that of Isaiah. It is not, "Shut thou their eyes," but "*their eyes have they closed.*" This change makes God's permissive and judicial agency less prominent, and the sinner's own voluntary agency more prominent. The latter agency Isaiah most fully and surely implies, and the former, neither Matthew nor Paul would exclude.—It should be noted that these Apostles, Matthew and Paul, quote from the Septuagint which reads, "The heart of this people has become gross; with their ears they hear heavily," (in dullness) "and their eyes have they shut lest they should see with their eyes," etc. This is entirely correct in sentiment, yet does not bring out in its full strength the divine agencies in withdrawing his Spirit and giving up self-hardened sinners in judgment to their own free and guilty choice of rebellion and death. It puts this guilty choice and this persistent refusal of the sinner in the foreground as facts never to be ignored. And rightly. The endorsement of this view by our Lord, as in Matthew (13: 14) and by Paul (Acts 28: 26) may be taken as a timely suggestion and caution against over-straining the divine agency in the judicial hardening of the persistent sinner. It would be ineffably revolting to give it such a construction as would ignore God's love and pity for even the guiltiest sinner, or his sincere and earnest desire that they would, any and all, turn from their sins and live.

A passage, in many respects very analogous to this is Jer. 1: 10. The Lord apprises Jeremiah of the *results* of his prophetic mission, representing him as doing directly what was to be the indirect result and in a sense the substantial outcome of his predictions. The phraseology is shaped to make the prophet's agency specially prominent. "See, I have this day set thee over the nations to root out and to pull down," etc.—These passages

, and Isaiah 6) have the common feature of an *installation* charge, to the prophetic work. For this purpose it was to give prominence to the *results* of their mission. It was to forewarn them of the heart-trials which they must bear in preaching to a hardened, gainsaying people, many of whom would become only the more obdurate, the more guilty, and obnoxious to a more fearful punishment, because of the greater they would thus sin against and the richer means of salvation they would thus repel and scorn. The prophets would need the unction of love and pity, of patience and firmness, of confidence to God and of trust in the wisdom of his moral administration, to bear the trial of preaching the truth of God to a people, in the face of such discouraging, trying, heart-breaking results. They would need to be reminded that still the result is infinitely good, notwithstanding hosts of guilty sinners condemn themselves to a deeper damnation by means of the very means which God employs to save them. They would need to realize that it becomes painfully incumbent upon the great moral government of the universe to honor the Divine Spirit by denying his manifested presence to those who abuse and insult him, and by inflicting exemplary judgments for this greatest of all sins. We have good reason to say "*painfully* incumbent," in view of his solemn oath: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. 33: 10.)

Let us pause a moment to think of the thrilling power of such a manifestation of the Lord to his servant, the prophet Isaiah. Occurring so very early in his prophetic life and throwing its influence over the long years of his ministry, how it must have filled and fired his soul with awe-inspiring, yet trustful, reverent and adoring views of his glorious Lord! What a baptism was this for his work! What holy unction did it impart to his spirit! What a tongue of fire did it give him for those sublimated utterances to which no other prophet fully attained! How only and sweetly he must have felt through all his remaining days—I have seen the Lord, the Great Messiah whose name and work I am to proclaim and the glories of whose kingdom on earth are the theme of the heavenly visions given to be published to the coming generations of mankind! Who can adequately appreciate the force of the influence which passed down through all his future life from this early and marvelous inauguration? Who can say how much it may have contributed to the sublimated majesty of his conceptions of the Holy Lord God of Israel, the glory of whose presence and kingdom are yet to fill the earth?—Oh if his ministering servants to-day might have such visions of the glory of their risen Lord! If their souls might be in like manner filled and fired with the sense of his

forgiving love and of his abiding presence, with what full heart and with what tongue of fire and words of power would they then speak of Him whom their eyes have almost seen; whose spiritual presence their very souls have surely felt!

11. Then said I, LORD, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate;

12. And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

Very naturally the prophet wishes to understand how long a time this judicial hardness of the people will continue. The Lord replies, "Until the country shall be utterly desolated." The judgments of God must be sufficiently stern to make an effective moral impression.—This removing of the men far away refers to their captivity in a foreign land. The "great forsaking" alludes to the land of Canaan as mainly left desolate and without population.

13. But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

A small remnant shall be spared through these repeated desolations, and shall yet become the germ and stock for a new and better growth.—The verb "return," in the clause, "it shall return" must here (as often) be taken adverbially, to signify a repetition of the same process, thus: "Yet shall there be in it a tenth" (spared from the general ruin), "but it shall be *again* consumed," ["eaten"]; "yet, as the teil tree and the oak whose vitality remains in them when they are cut down," (not when they "cast their leaves," but when they are themselves cast down); "so the holy seed shall be *its* vitality," or substance, still preserving the germ of life and yet again springing up to be a new and holier people.

## CHAPTER VII.

WITH this chapter commences a series of prophecies bearing date in the reign of Ahaz. There seems to be no reasonable doubt that this series continues at least to the close of chap. 12. We find no indication of a new and later date till we reach chap. 14: 28, which locates a special prophecy recorded there "in the

year that king Ahaz died." The drift of this shows it to have been brought out shortly after his death.—In chap. 7 Ahaz is imperiled and alarmed by the combined armies of Syria and Israel. Isaiah is sent to meet him and to encourage him to trust, not in Assyria as he would, but in the living God as he chose not to do. Ahaz seeming incredulous, the prophet proposes to give him a sign of his own divine commission and of the Lord's promised help. He announces that a child called Immanuel is born of a virgin; makes the food of that child for a brief period, an index of national calamity, but indicates that it will be short. The Assyrians will desolate the land more fearfully.

1. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

The history of Ahaz may be seen in 2 Kings 16, and 2 Chron. 28. Suffice it to say of him here that the sacred record shows him to have been intensely wicked; more radically apostate from God than any Jewish king before him; more propense to idol-worship, and more reckless of God and of the dictates of common humanity. It seems that very early in his reign the Syrians made war upon him; defeated his army with immense slaughter, and took many captives; also that Pekah, king of Israel (here called Ephraim), prevailed against him; "slew one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers," and took two hundred thousand captives. All these, at the instance of the prophet Oded, were restored to their homes. It appears however, both from 2 Kings 16 : 5, and from the statements here that these hostile kingdoms, even combined, were not able to take Jerusalem. Still those allies were a formidable power, and their approach at this time gave the court of Ahaz and the inhabitants of Jerusalem occasion for serious fear.

2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

The "house of David" includes not Ahaz alone, but his family and court.—The original word rendered "confederate" means *to rest upon*, some have thought in the sense of encamping within their territory on their way to Judah; but probably the ultimate sense is given in the English version.—The trembling of hearts in the great city is forcibly compared to the swaying and rocking of forest trees before a strong wind.



3. Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;

4. And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

The manifest kindness of the Lord in these efforts to allay the fears of the king and of his people, and to assure them against the danger of national ruin from those combined kingdoms suggests that the people were at this time less guilty and apostate than their prince, and that these consoling words were more for their sake than for his. The time had not come to destroy the city and the nation, though personally Ahaz richly deserved the sorest judgments.—The prophet took with him his son especially because of the significance of his name "Shear-jashub," *a remnant shall return*. His presence, suggesting his name, became itself a prophecy pertinent to the times.—The location of this upper pool is settled satisfactorily by Robinson and Smith. See "Biblical Researches in Palestine" vol. 1. 352, 483. They found it about seven hundred yards W. N. W. from the Yafa gate at the head of the valley of the Son of Hinnom, and west of the city.—Ahaz was there, we may suppose, to arrange for securing its waters against being diverted from the use of the city to the use of its approaching enemies.—The prophet's message is, "Be careful, and be quiet and allay your fears; be not alarmed by these two tails of smoking fire-brands, Rezin and Pekah, who have indeed been dangerous and destructive as wood on fire, but are now burnt down till they are only the tails of smoking brands, nearly consumed, and with little or no further power for harm.—This incidental mention of the "highway of the fuller's field" is one of the most conclusive marks of genuineness, being such a mention as the forger of a fictitious narrative, ages later, neither would make nor could.

5. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

6. Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal:

7. Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

The connection of thought here is, Be not afraid of Rezin



d Pekah, for "because" (v. 5) they have conspired against thee, the Lord saith (v. 7) "it shall not stand," their plans shall surely fail.—Though Judah only is named (v. 6) yet Jerusalem was the special object of assault. See v. 1.—The intents of their plan were, to make a joint assault upon the city, to alarm ("vex") it; to breach its walls so that they could capture it; and to set up over it a king of their own, to rule it for their own interest.

8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Romaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Their plans shall not succeed; for Damascus shall continue to be the capital of Syria, and of nothing more; Rezin shall be the headman, the king, of Damascus and not of Jerusalem besides; and within sixty-five years shall Ephraim be so completely crushed as to be no people. And not only so, but up to that time (sixty-five years hence) Samaria shall be the capital of Ephraim only, not of Ephraim and of Judah both. Ye need therefore have no fear of the partition of Judah between these foreign powers, or of her being attached as a tributary to either of them.—Sacred history notes three stages in the fall of the kingdom. (1.) A successful invasion by Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, in the days of Pekah (2 Kings, 15: 29). (2.) The actual conquest of the country and destruction of Samaria by Shalmaneser about the sixth year of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18: 17, and 17: 3–23.) And (3.) The final deportation of all the remaining inhabitants by Esar-haddon. Ezra (chapter 4: 2) is the standard authority for attributing this deportation to Esar-haddon. The Samaritans of Ezra's time said, "Esar-haddon brought us up hither." The historian of 2 Kings 17: 24 states that the king of Assyria, i. e., Esar-haddon, brought men from Babylon, etc., and placed them in the cities of Samaria, *instead of the children of Israel.*" This renders it at least probable that the same king took away the last remnant of the people of the ten tribes. The close of sixty-five years from the date of this prophecy falls within his reign. Sixty-five years include these three stages in the fall of the northern kingdom. After the expiration of this period they were really "not a people." This prophecy therefore was fulfilled with entire precision.—In the phrase, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," the last word might refer to a state of mind, posing in settled trust and peace; or to an external state, one

of assured prosperity. I prefer the latter, following the usage of the same words in 2 Chron. 20: 20, where Jehoshaphat said to his warriors, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." Here, being "established" refers to things external to themselves, viz., success in their conflict.—The original repeats the same verb in two different grammatical forms; "If ye will not *accept God as sure*, ye shall not *be made sure*," i. e., of the desired result. The verb is the root of our word *amen*. If ye will not say *amen* to God, he will not say *amen* to you. If ye will not trust him, he will not grant you the fruit of trusting him, i. e., success. So vital is faith in God to real prosperity in any work.

10. Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

11. Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

The supposition, "*If ye will not believe*," assumes that the Lord or his prophet saw indications of unbelief. These verses assume the same thing. Here the Lord meets it by proposing to Ahaz to ask a sign from the Lord which might remove his skepticism, and confirm his trust in the Lord and in his prophet. At your option name a sign either in heaven above, or on the earth beneath. Literally, the original would read, "Go deep to ask, or go up on high."

12. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

This kind and generous proposal, Ahaz insultingly rejects; "I want nothing to do with God's *signs*. I have my own plans for defending my city and kingdom!" It does not relieve his impiety at all, that with very pious pretensions, he would fain quote Scripture to justify his refusal. The Lord had indeed said (Deut. 6: 16), "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." That was the sin of tempting God in the sense of overtaxing his patience by their unbelief and consequent murmuring; a sin analogous to the unbelief of which Ahaz was deeply guilty, and not at all analogous to accepting God's proposal and naming a sign at his request. In the case of Ahaz, this was a mere pretense of regard for God, a regard which his heart seems never to have felt.

13. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

The prophet's soul kindles with indignation. "Is it a small

thing that ye should task even to weariness the patience of men, the servants of the living God; will ye weary my God too? Will ye abuse him *so*—the Great God whom I serve?—The phrase, "House of David," is significant; a lineal descendant of the good king David, and sitting on his throne; will you so condemn the God whom he loved to worship and adore?

14. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

16. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

This passage is both specially difficult and quite important. Christian men in all ages have regarded it as being in some way a prediction that the virgin (Mary) should give birth to the child Jesus, who only is, in the highest sense, Immanuel—God with us. But it is by no means easy to show how this can be reconciled with all the attendant circumstances as given here, *e. g.*, the sign to Ahaz; this child's eating butter and honey up to a certain stage of moral development, prior to which the lands then in formidable league against Judah, should both lose their kings.—It does not fall within my plan in this commentary to give an exhaustive statement of the views of other commentators. The importance of this passage, however, will justify if not even demand a brief allusion to the different modes of interpretation which have found most favor. But first some of the words and phrases should be explained.—A "sign" may have considerable latitude of meaning as to the sort of thing shown, but it must be something adapted to assure the mind of some truth or fact; in this case, something that might assure Ahaz and his people that they need not fear the utter ruin of the nation from these combined enemies. The sign given to Moses in Horeb that God would bring Israel out of Egypt under his leadership, was, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Ex. 3: 11, 12.) This implied and involved the main point, the deliverance from Egypt. This sign to Ahaz, a coming Messiah whose memorial should be, "*God with us*," is analogous to that given to Moses.—"The Lord himself," *he* emphatically gives this sign, *i. e.*, the prediction of this wondrous birth.—"A virgin" should be translated "*the virgin*," corresponding to the original which has the definite article.—This Hebrew word for virgin is always used for unmarried females, and is properly rendered virgin. It occurs elsewhere

in the following passages; viz., Gen. 24: 43, and Ex. 2: 8, and Ps. 68: 26, and Prov. 30: 19, and Cant. 1: 3, and 6: 8.—The Hebrew words rendered, “shall conceive” and “shall bear,” are in the present tense, meaning, *is with child and is bringing forth*, or, at least, *is soon to bring forth*, a son. The first is strictly a verbal adjective denoting a state of pregnancy, and the second is the participle, which is uniformly used in Hebrew for the present tense.—“Shall call his name” etc., according to the well established usage of Isaiah, means not necessarily that this shall be his proper name really in current use, but rather that he shall really *be such*, shall be truly *God with us*, and therefore rightly called so because he *is so*.—“Curds” (rather than “butter”) “and honey shall be eat,” not *in order that* he may know good from evil, as if this kind of food would hasten such a result better than any other, but *until* he shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good; literally, *up to the knowing*, etc.—This eating of curds and honey, as appears in v. 22, does not imply general prosperity, but rather general calamity. The people being few in number and field culture being neglected, a young cow and two sheep would find so much waste country for their range of pasture that they would supply their owner with curds; and the wild honey of the rocks will be abundant for the few who survive to gather it.—The entire statement, therefore, assures the king and his people that God pledges his presence among them as their Deliverer; that for a brief period, calamity shall press sorely on the land; but ere this brief period shall close, those hostile kings shall both perish.

The way is now prepared to discuss the main question, *Who is this child Immanuel?* and how can we reconcile what is said of him here with what is claimed by Matthew (chap. 1: 22, 23), and most fully believed by the great body of Christians in every age? Matthew claims that the birth of Jesus of the Virgin Mary was precisely the fulfillment of this prophecy, and so the church has believed. *How can this be?*

The opinions held by critics fall naturally into three groups, each group subject more or less to modifications.

1. That both Isaiah and Matthew think of but one virgin mother, and one child, and that they lived in the times of Ahaz; that the virgin was married shortly after this prophecy was uttered, and gave birth to a child whom she called Immanuel. Long afterward Matthew observed a striking analogy between that virgin mother and that child Immanuel, of the times of Ahaz on the one hand; and on the other the virgin mother, Mary, of his own times and her child Jesus, yet more truly an Immanuel; and therefore accounted the language of Isaiah to be specially and strikingly fulfilled in these events of his own day. Yet neither Isaiah nor the Spirit by whom he spake thought

(according to this theory) of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus. It so happened that their language was applicable and therefore might be said to have (*as language*) a sort of *fulfillment* in the events of the gospel age.

2. That this language of the prophet means really and properly two things; speaks of two virgin mothers and of two infants born; the first mother and child living in the days of Ahaz; the second at the Christian era. As held by most of its advocates, this theory would really apply only to v. 14,—the conception and birth of a Son Immanuel of a virgin; while vs. 15, 16 would apply only to the child born in the days of Ahaz.—This theory is often known as that of “the double sense.”—By a special modification of it, the first series of events is held to be purposely typical of the second, both series however being really involved and implied in the language used.

3. That only one virgin and one child Immanuel are spoken of, viz., the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus; that they are shown to the prophet in vision with no reference to *time*, but are shown so vividly that he sees them, and thinks of them *as present*, and therefore speaks of them as related to present events, and so makes the youthful years and the food of the child indications of important future facts.

1. Of these three theories the first must be rejected, unless we are prepared to discredit the inspiration of Matthew. For he manifestly regarded Isaiah's words as real prophecy; and as fulfilled not by accommodation of the language, but by the shaping of the events. Matthew's words are, “Now *all this*” (respecting the miraculous conception by a virgin, etc.) “*was done* that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,”—things which no prophet without the Lord could have foreseen and have said. According to Matthew, therefore, here is a case of real prophecy, and therefore, a case which compels us to find the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus within the actual meaning of Isaiah. Hence for this, as well as for other reasons, this first theory of interpreting this passage must be dismissed as untenable.

2. To the second theory many able critics and excellent men have given their names. In my view, the double sense has inherent and almost insuperable difficulties. They appear when we press closely such questions as these; How can two virgin mothers be “*the virgin*?” If the Hebrew were “*a*” *virgin*, then two such—one living then; the other, at the Christian era, might with more propriety come under the language.—Further: how could the prophet say of the two, living so remote in time from each other; “*is with child; is bringing forth*?” How could this be true of *both*? Moreover, who was this first virgin? Was she the (future) wife of Isaiah, as some maintain?

But Isaiah had been married several years, for he had one son with him at this time.—Again was the conception of this first virgin mother miraculous? If *not*, how is it that the same language implies the conception of the second to be so?—On the other hand, if *so*, what was the object of that miracle? It is not obnoxious to this grave objection—a miracle without an adequate and worthy object?—Again; is not the child of vs. 15, 16, the same as the one in v. 14? And if so, how on this theory do these statements in vs. 15, 16 apply to the second of the two Immanuels? And if they do not so apply, on what principle is he dropped after v. 14?—Yet again, does not the allusion in chap. 8: 8 to Immanuel as the Lord of that land (“shall fill the breadth of *thy* land, O Immanuel”) contemplate *one Immanuel only*, and he, not some other and first child, born of some unknown mother, but the real Immanuel, the Son of the living God?—These questions may perhaps suffice to indicate some of the stubborn difficulties which embarrass the interpretation by the double sense.—Some of these difficulties are materially lessened by a modification of this second theory which restricts the prophet’s words in their primary legitimate sense to a virgin mother, and her son called Immanuel, of those days; but holds that the prophet thought of them as real *types*, patterns, symbols, of the second virgin and of her Son Immanuel. In this view Mary and Jesus are not directly embraced under the prophet’s language, but rather under the type or symbol of the first mother and her son.—It cannot be denied that types appear in the Old Testament. The objection to finding types here, therefore, is not that they are foreign to the genius of the Old Testament and therefore inadmissible.—But some of the objections to the double sense as above indicated, lie also against this typical theory of interpreting this prophecy; especially these. It does not meet the obvious significance of the definite article, “*the* virgin,” one already somewhat known in prophecy as the human mother of the Messiah; nor the implication that the conception is miraculous; nor the allusion to the Messiah’s land in chap. 8: 8.

III. The third and last theory is not without its difficulties; yet I on the whole prefer it to any other. If those difficulties can be in a reasonable degree obviated, the construction of the passage on this theory is clear, simple and straightforward, comprising a prophecy of the most decided character, to which the words of Matthew apply in their natural and full force, to recognize the prophecy and to confirm its fulfilment.—Under this construction, the passage may be paraphrased thus: “Lo, I seem to see *the* virgin (of prophecy) with child and giving birth to a Son, who is truly Immanuel, *God with us!* This Son shall be our Great Deliverer! Surrounded by his presence and protected

by his arm, our nation cannot sink ! As I think of him already born and note the circumstances of his earliest years, I see that there shall be general calamity nearly up to the time of his attaining moral accountability ; but shortly before he shall reach that point, those two kings whom you fear shall perish and their kingdoms shall be weakened if not even wasted by anarchy. Hence, under the powerful protection of Immanuel (God with us), you need not fear the national extinction of his Zion."

There are two principal objections to this theory :—1. How could an allusion to the human birth of an Immanuel become an assuring sign to Ahaz ?—2. How could the prophet think of the Messiah as born at that time ? Can it be supposed that so grave an error can consist with prophetic inspiration ?—Of these objections, the latter is the chief.

1. The former soon disappears when we think of the prophecies already before the people respecting their Messiah. The eye and heart of the nation had been fixed for ages on some extraordinary "seed of the woman" who should "bruise the head" of the old serpent. (Gen. 3 : 15.) Abraham had been assured that in his seed all the nations should be blessed. (Gen. 12 : 3, and 18 : 18.) David had received precious assurances that a king should arise in his line whose throne should be established forever. (2 Samuel 7 : 12–16.) Micah, near this very time, saw deliverance waiting till "she that travaileth should bring forth" (Micah 5 : 3), "but coming then in glory." Isaiah had already spoken of "the fruit of the earth as excellent and comely, for the escaped (the surviving remnant) of Israel, (chap. 4 : 2). Moreover, the doctrine of a present God, the salvation of his people, was wrought into the warp and woof of their nation's history. This sign to Ahaz made that great doctrine the more distinctly tangible, by bringing immediately before him as a present reality the birth of that wondrous Messiah. It was, of all things possible, best adapted to assure his heart (if indeed his heart could be assured) of the glorious help of the Almighty. Hence, the nature of this "sign" is no objection, but becomes really an argument for this theory of interpretation. The "sign" is pre-eminently appropriate and expressive.

2. In reply to the second objection, How could the prophet think of the Messiah as being born at that time ? I remark, (1) the language used by the prophets commonly indicates that in making revelations to them the Lord presented objects to their eye. They speak of their "*visions*;" of things as "*shown*" to them; and of themselves as being *caused to see*. But the sense of sight does not originally locate objects in space as near or remote, *i. e.*, does not give their distance. So prophetic vision may have given no certain notion of distance as to time. Objects may have been simply *seen*, perhaps seen as *future*, yet with no defi-



nite location of time in that future.—(2.) This view is more than merely hypothetical. The indications are abundant that the prophets saw facts and events without a precise apprehension of their actual date, or *place in time*. It is commonly admitted to be the law of prophetic language to use the past tense in speaking of future events; in other words, the prophets speak as if they saw events actually far in the future, *as if past* or *then passing*. It is certain that cases of this sort are frequent. Here is one for illustration, close at hand, and by no means foreign from our subject. Speaking of the birth of the Messiah, Isaiah says (9: 6). "For unto us a child *is born*; unto us a son *is given*," etc. In the original these tenses are preter; but our received translation very properly renders them as present. For the great practical purposes of Christian faith and hope, the Messiah was already born and present, seen so by the eye of prophecy, felt to be so by the Christian heart. Hence, little as we can know about the *manner* in which God made revelations of the future to his prophets, this fact must be admitted. He did not teach them all the truths in regard to the precise *time* when these events should occur, but revealed the events in such a way as left the question of time still undetermined, to be a subject of anxious inquiry even to the prophets themselves, and to be ascertained, sometimes at least in other ways than by direct revelation. (3.) Remarkably in harmony with this view given us by the Old Testament is the statement made by Peter (I. Peter 1: 10, 11); "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently.....searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." This statement not merely implies but asserts that the ancient prophets who spake of Christ's sufferings were not fully enlightened as to the *time*, or as to the *circumstances* of the time, of the events revealed to them. These points were to them matters of diligent search and earnest enquiry. Hence it surely *might* happen that their first impressions should be that the things they saw in vision were present, but the after thought—"the searching diligently" what time or what sort of a time, the Spirit signified to them—might modify that first impression. The inspirations of prophecy did not make them omniscient. Some points were left indeterminate for further enquiry, for deep and earnest search. —Thus it appears that the main objection to this theory, viz., How could the prophet be so much mistaken as to the *time* of the Messiah's birth? has been in a sort anticipated and provided for in both the Old Testament views of prophecy and the New. It is indeed not improbable that Peter (I. Epistle 1: 10, 11) had this case in mind. The point objected to must therefore have some foundation in truth. The assumption that God always



gave them accurately the *time* of the events shown them, must surely be an error of fact.—The peculiarity in our passage is not so much that the prophet uses the present tense, “Behold the virgin *is* with child and *is* bringing forth,” as that he proceeds to speak of the child as then entering upon human life, eating and growing in knowledge up to the period of moral discriminations and choices. But this is only carrying out for the moment the idea of a birth then present. Whether this thought of his was transient or was abiding; whether it remained in his mind as a fixed opinion, or was only spoken as the natural and first impression made by the very manner in which the things were shown to him, it is quite beyond our province to determine. We know too little about the psychology of inspiration, and too little of its imperfections and of their laws, to affirm any thing positively on these points by virtue of any intuitions of our own. So far as the prophets indicate their views, we have data, and no further.—In the present case, Isaiah in this immediate connection (viz., 8 : 8) contemplates Immanuel as the Lord and Protector of that land; for, speaking of the great Assyrian hosts as a river in its inundations, he says: “The stretching forth of his wings shall fill the breadth of *thy* land, O Immanuel.” The inspiration and impulse of this thought (as seen in the context) show that Isaiah felt the power of a present Immanuel defending and saving his own land. See notes on the passage. How much this impression depended upon, or was quickened by, the prophet’s view of his recent human birth, it would be very difficult to show. It is at least fully as difficult to deny and disprove any such dependence or quickening. It is however pertinent to remark that the *fact* of his human birth was indefinitely more vital than the *time when*, since the fact, come when it might, testified to his permanent relation as Redeemer and Deliverer—the main thing which the people needed to understand.—To forestall possible misapprehension, let me say here that whenever the Lord purposed to reveal the time of future events, I hold that he never lacked the means or the power to do so, unequivocally. The case seems to be that sometimes the Lord sought to reveal events simply, without their time of occurrence. Prophetic knowledge fell far short of omniscience. Facts and events, without their precise dates, might sometimes answer every desired end for the generations then living.—Finally, it were vain to deny that this entire subject of prophecy and this passage in particular, involve difficulties. Amid so many discordant opinions of able interpreters, it would be idle presumption for any man to assume that his views will satisfy all men. Modest critics should express their opinions without reserve, and also without bigotry—freely conceding to others the same liberty of thought and utterance which they claim and use for themselves, hopeful that thus free discussion will

evolve new light, promote sound criticism, and conduce to the ultimate development of all essential truth.

17. The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of Assyria.

Still addressing Ahaz, the prophet declares that the Lord will bring upon him, his people and the royal family, *i. e.*, subsequent kings of his line, a state of things unknown since the revolt of the ten tribes. The last words of the verse allude plainly to the king of Assyria. Thou hast no cause, O Ahaz, to fear the fall of thy throne before the combined powers of Syria and Ephraim, whom thou so much fearest. Thy danger is wholly from the king of Assyria to whom thou art looking for protection.—So vain are thy plans for the safety of thy kingdom! So sure is the ruin of all who spurn God's counsel and discard his help! —This passage does not aver specifically that the devastations wrought by Assyria should surpass all the previous devastations of war in Judah since the revolt; but only that their type should be different from anything previously experienced. They should be *such* days as the people had not seen before. It is implied both in this verse and below that the Assyrians should prove very destructive. The fact was that they did lay much of the country desolate by their predatory ravages (see 2 Chron. 28: 20. 2 Kings 18: 13–16, and 19: 29–31, or Isaiah 37: 30–32), although they never subdued Jerusalem. They also subjected the throne to a disgraceful and dangerous tribute—a thing unknown before. But so far as appears in the record, Ahaz lost more lives in his wars with Syria and Ephraim than ever Judah lost from Assyria.

18. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

19. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

With supreme control the Lord calls forth the mightiest nations, heathen nations too that had never recognized his authority, to do his bidding as his scourge upon his sinning people. The figure here corresponds to that in chap. 5: 26, the Lord summoning them to his work as the keeper of bees calls them by his whistle. So the Lord calls the flies from the remote rivers of Egypt and the bees from Assyria. There may be a tacit historical allusion to the plague of flies on Egypt, which came and

went, then as now, at the Lord's signal call.—V. 19, keeping up the figure, represents these swarms of flies and bees as settling down where those animals naturally would, upon the desolate valleys, the crevices of the rocks, the thorn hedges and pasture grounds (as the word means rather than "bushes"). The sentiment is that those invading armies overspread the rural districts and took possession there.

20. In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, *namely*, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

A new figure sets forth the devastation of the country as being both general, sweeping away most of its valuable productions and also disgraceful to the king and his people. The hair of the entire person, but especially the beard, was cherished by the orientals with a regard amounting almost to veneration. Hence the disgrace of being shorn. The king of Assyria is called a "*hired razor*" with a tacit reference to the fact that Ahaz had hired him to come to his assistance. Alluding to that, the Lord would say: You have seen fit to reject the help of your own God and to hire the Assyrian for your helper. I have hired him for my razor to shave your whole kingdom but too clean and too fearfully to the disgrace of your throne!

21. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep;

22. And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk *that* they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

Whether so intended or not, these verses really fix the meaning of the allusion of v. 15 to the eating of curds and honey. The country is so thinly peopled and so little cultivated that a poor man, though he can own but one cow and two sheep, will yet be supplied with milk. He subsists on this together with wild honey and not at all on the usual grains raised by cultivation.

23. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall *even* be for briers and thorns.

24. With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither: because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

The districts once cultivated and planted with vines, so valuable and abundant that a thousand of them are worth a thousand pieces of silver, are now waste and overgrown with briers and

thorns. Men go there armed with bows and arrows, either for the chase or for personal protection in such wild districts.

25. And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

The same general desolation shall reach also the more hilly tracts where the ground in better days had been dug up with the mattock. There, too, are briers and thorns, and in fear of them, you will not wisely venture there. This seems to be the sense of the Hebrew—not that the fear of briers and thorns will not go there, but that you will not go there because the fear of briers and thorns will restrain you. A few cattle may find pasture there.—Such is the picture of the desolations brought upon the land by the Assyrian armies.



## CHAPTER VIII.

ACCORDING to the course of thought, this chapter should close with v. 7 of chap. 9. The subject is not complete at any point short of that.—These are the times of Ahaz. The historical circumstances which gave occasion to this message are essentially those upon which chap. 7 is based; viz., Ahaz, his court and many at least of his people, greatly alarmed by the combination of Syria and Ephraim against Judah; and in order to avert this danger, calling to their aid the king of Assyria. This policy displeased God, inasmuch as it implied a most unreasonable, ungrateful and cruel unbelief in himself, and exposed them to all the evils of being dependent upon the favor of an idolatrous and wicked nation. The Lord therefore first assures them that they have nothing to fear from Damascus and Samaria (the capitals representing the kingdoms), since those cities would soon be despoiled and ere long laid desolate; and next, he declares that he will scourge and punish them by bringing upon them as a foe the very power they had been inviting to their aid as a friend, the great Assyrian hosts. In discoursing upon this point, the prophet aims especially to encourage faith in God and not in Assyria or in any other power; also to lead them to fear God and none else besides, and to resort to God and not to spirits of the

dead or of the living for knowledge of the future or for relief from danger.—Galilee of the Gentiles having suffered specially from the inroads of the Assyrian hordes, the prophet, looking afar down into the gospel age, sees that same region rejoicing in great light under the preaching and labors of the Messiah during his earthly life, and thereupon takes occasion to celebrate the glorious character and reign of the Prince of peace.

1. Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

2. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

3. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

4. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

In these verses the Lord predicts that Damascus and Samaria, the capitals respectively of Syria and Ephraim, shall be plundered within two or three years by the king of Assyria. Special arrangements are made to fix the date of the prophecy and the interval of time before its fulfillment so as to leave no room to doubt that it was a real prophecy spoken not only before the event, but before such an event had seemed to human view at all probable. These arrangements comprised, (1) The writing of the emphatic and significant phrase, "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz," upon a large "roll," or rather a smooth tablet, in very large letters; and (2) In giving this name to a child born to the prophet, with the divine promise that before this child could say "my father, and my mother," the event predicted by his name should take place. This name signifies "Speed the plunder, the spoiling hastens on." More briefly and nearer to the form of the Hebrew, thus:—Hasten—booty; speed-spoil.—Writing "with a man's pen" is supposed to refer to letters in common use and known to the common people, another sort of pen being used perhaps for characters, known to the learned only. The object was to make the writing entirely legible to all, so that he that ran might read.—It was not properly something "*concerning*" this Hebrew name that the prophet was to write, but the name itself.—V. 2 is supposed to continue the words spoken by the Lord to the prophet, "And let me take witnesses for the truth of this prophecy that I now give you," even Uriah, the same probably who appears in 2 Kings 16: 10-16,

cooperating with the king in idol worship, and therefore a specially suitable witness in this case; and Zechariah who was doubtless the father-in-law of Ahaz, and maternal grandfather of Hezekiah. See 2 Kings 18: 2, and 2 Chron. 29: 1. These were "faithful witnesses," such men as Ahaz especially would confide in.—The significant name given to this child corresponds to the case of his other son, "Shear Jashub," "a remnant shall return;" and also to the three children born to Hosea, each of whom had its significant name. All these children became through their very names prophetic heralds; every utterance or thought of either name suggesting the event it predicted.

5. The LORD spake unto me again, saying,

6. Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

7. Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

8. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

The general sentiment of this passage is clear. Because the Jews reject God's help which comes to them quietly, fraught with blessings only, God will bring upon them the hosts of the great Assyrian king. Like a flood they shall sweep over the land with terrible devastation, yet not to its utter destruction.—The waters of Shiloah, flowing gently, are beautifully symbolic of those unfailing supplies of good which flow down from God upon his obedient people as from a living fountain.—The Lord speaks of them as "*this people*" and not "*my people*," because their attitude was that of cold and cruel unbelief and virtual apostasy from God.—The question, why are they said to rejoice in Rezin and Pekah? has been answered quite variously. Some have supposed an allusion here to a political party averse to the policy of Ahaz, and sympathizing with Ephraim and Syria, and not, like Ahaz, with the Assyrian king. But if there were such a party, the fact does not seem to be a reason why the Lord should flood the land with the great Assyrian river. The more probable view therefore is that the words are spoken of Ahaz and of his friends, and refer to their exultant joy in the historic fact that the Assyrian army by threatening the countries

of Rezin and of Remaliah's son, had compelled them to withdraw from Judah to protect their own dominions. The special point then would be that both because this people refuse the protection of the God of Israel, and because they were at that moment exulting in the supposed success of their policy in calling in the Assyrian king, therefore the Lord will bring this same king and his victorious hosts over their land.—This Assyrian raid is beautifully expressed here as an *inundation* of the great Euphrates, which is often called as here "*the river*," the great river of Western Asia, and subject, much like the Nile, to periodical inundations. It rises mightily, rushes over all its banks; having swept over Syria and Ephraim, it comes down upon Judah too, yet not quite deep enough here to drown all the people, the waters rising only to the neck. But the spreading out of his wings, the outreaching tides of his great waters, shall fill the breadth of thy land, Immanuel, i. e., the land of Judah, still under the protection of Jehovah Jesus, "God with us." Obviously this alludes to the Messiah's birth of the virgin as foretold, or rather seen in vision as present, in chap. 7: 14. Hence, it leaves no room for doubt that the prophet thought of this child as really the promised Messiah, already actually ruling in his power, and shielding his people under his omnipotent arm.—As to the actual extent of the desolations brought upon Judah by this great Assyrian invasion, see notes on chap. 10: 24.

9. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

10. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.

The course of thought here is obvious. The prophet's soul, touched with the name Immanuel, becomes all aflame with faith in Zion's King and with indignation that heathen powers should combine to lay his land desolate. So he boldly challenges them to do their worst; it should only recoil on themselves and crush them with the more terrible destruction. The Mighty Immanuel will make the wrath of men praise himself, and will gird about him even the extremest human wrath as his weapon for their ruin. See Ps. 76: 10.—The first verb, rendered "Associate yourselves," comes rather from the Hebrew verb, which means *to do evil, to act wickedly* used here in keen irony. Do your worst; be as madly wicked as you will in your rage against God; you will only the more surely be broken to pieces.



Gird yourselves all you please, for fierce and formidable war. The only result of such war against Immanuel's land must be your own ruin. Plan never so wisely, all shall avail you nothing against Infinite Wisdom. Speak the word; command the assault; it shall not succeed, for *Immanuel*, God is with us. The truth involved in this significant name gives us absolute assurance of salvation for Zion and of ruin for her foes.—In the last clause of v. 10, the Hebrew has simply, "*for Immanuel.*"

11. For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

12. Say ye not, a confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let* him be your fear, and *let* him be your dread.

The prophet speaks. Here as in v. 6, "this people" are the king (Ahaz,) and the people who sympathize with him.—The Lord spake to his people "with a strong hand," analogous to the expression, "The hand of the Lord was strong or heavy upon me" (Ezek. 3: 14), meaning that the Lord spake this very emphatically, and made a strong impression on the prophet's mind.—"And instructed me *from going* in the way of this people," is the form of expression in the original.—The word rendered "Confederacy" should rather be *conspiracy*, it being always used of a treasonable combination against the government, and therefore could not apply to a combination between foreign powers, *e. g.*, Syria and Ephraim. See its use in 2 Kings 11: 14, and 12: 20, and 14: 19, and 15: 30. Hence this v. 12 assumes that the prophet and the pious people with him ("ye," not *thou* only), who disapproved the king's policy in applying to Assyria for aid, were (like Jeremiah in his day) accused of treason against the throne. Hence the Lord here admonishes them not to call that treason and conspiracy which "this people" call by that name. Give not the name of "conspiracy" as a term of reproach and a brand of national crime, to your noble and rightful protest against resorting to heathen powers for aid rather than to God alone.—"Neither fear ye the thing they fear," viz., the combination between Syria and Ephraim. But on the contrary, honor and glorify (the sense here of "sanctify") the Lord of hosts himself; honor him as the King and Protector of his people and believe in his power to save. Let him alone be the object of your fear; God, rather than those combined national enemies; God, rather than the stigma of treason and



the dread of punishment on such a charge.—Good counsel; for when did the Lord ever fail to stand by those who truly honor him, amid whatever perils? When have good men ever nobly confronted the foes of God and yet failed of his protecting arm? When have they ever stood up staunchly against the sins of rulers and of governments, and yet have failed to have God on their side?

14. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

“Sanctuary,” here, follows the sense of the word “Sanctify,” in v. 13. As that means there, to honor and trust God, to recognize his infinite perfection and treat him accordingly; so does this designate him as an object worthy of such honor and trust.—The reference to this passage in 1 Peter 2: 7, where it is pertinently applied to Christ, gives it this meaning; honor, preciousness: translated there; “to you who believe he is precious;” but the literal rendering is *preciousness*; an object held in the highest conceivable honor and esteem. Such he *should be* to all his people; such he *is* to all who truly believe in him. But over against this, to wicked unbelievers he is only a stone to stumble over, a rock to strike against, to both the houses of Israel, to both kingdoms, now deeply apostate from God. By yet another figure, he is a gin and a snare, to entrap and destroy the men of Jerusalem, many of whom must meet this doom because of their unbelief and rejection of an offered Deliverer.—So it will and must be when guilty men reject the only possible help that could meet their wants. That offered Help (Christ Jesus) which, accepted, would be a glory and a redeeming power, becomes instead, when rejected, a stumbling-stone and a snare for their destruction.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

The Messiah, present so intimately in thought throughout the two verses preceding, appears here as the speaker. It is

he who says (v. 16) "*my* disciples;" a phrase familiar to his lips during his life in the flesh. It is he who says (v. 18), "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me;" these very words being cited by Paul to the Hebrews (2: 13) as said by Jesus and as signifying that he is partaker with his children of flesh and blood, and in common with them, has in God a Father, so that they are all *of one*."—But the Messiah being the speaker, what is his meaning? This: Bind up and seal in the hearts of my obedient and trustful people, these great truths just spoken. They are to be my witnesses to these truths. Let them note with care each word and thought. I too am to wait upon the Lord for my time of fuller manifestation in human flesh, and for the fuller revelation of my glory; am to wait through and past these periods of the Lord's displeasure against his apostate people till the fullness of time shall have come. So long I too, like yourselves must look in waiting expectation. But note ("behold"), both myself and my children are for signs and wonders from the Lord, his witnesses against sin, standing up against wicked kings on their thrones and against sin in high places, to the astonishment of those who see only the human side and prudential aspect of things—our mission being perpetually that of protesting against sin, annoying the wicked in their sins, and thus exposing ourselves to shame and even peril.—There may perhaps be a tacit allusion to the significant names given to the Messiah ("Immanuel"), and to the children of the prophet (Shear Jashub, and Mahar-Shalal-Hash-Baz) as being names of wonderful import, and hence significant of the standing mission of God's faithful people to be bold witnesses of startling, momentous truths in a wicked world. A tacit allusion to these recent circumstances seems to have had its influence in shaping this language, "I and the children God has given me are for signs and wonders, etc.

19. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

20. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.*

Men who have no trust in God are wont in their days of calamity to go, like king Saul, to those who are thought to have communion with spiritual agencies outside of this mortal life. Hence in every age of the world there have been men and women who profess to meet this want, playing upon the credulity or the

sharp necessities of anxious souls by various arts of deception, pretension, legerdemain, and ventriloquism. Here the Lord admonishes his people on this point. When they advise you to go to those who profess to know the spirits, the super-wise men ("wizards"), "who peep and mutter," as if strange, uncouth sounds best befitted the dignity of such spirits and of human fellowship with them; then reply to them—Should not people seek unto their own God if they would know the future, or the things of the unseen world? Has not the Great God all knowledge and supreme control over all other worlds and over all the future of this? Is it not all-sufficient that you may go to your own God for all wisdom and for all needful help?—Besides, think of the absurdity of your course—to go in behalf of the living to dead men! Can the dead bring any help to the living? "A living dog is better than a dead lion," and yet you expect the living to get wisdom and power from the dead! Repel such absurdity and nonsense! Go rather to the law and the testimony, the sure word of God, for this reveals all that mortals need to know under the pressure of present ills, or the fear of the otherwise dark and unknown future. If any class of men discard this word of God and speak not according to its revelations, they are those upon whose darkness no dawn of hope shall ever rise.—In the last clause of v. 20, our translators took the word rendered "light," properly *dawn of day*, in the sense of knowledge. Both usage and the context here favor the sense of light as opposed to darkness, the dawn of hope and joy after the night of gloom and trouble. No such dawn shall ever break out upon the midnight of those who reject God and his word, to seek instead unto necromancers and wizards, to get that help from the spirits of the dead which none can give them but the Infinite God.—Is it not most righteous that He should regard such seeking as an insult to himself and to his perfect word of revelation, and that, consequently, he should doom such seekers to the darkness, deception and ruin, which their folly and abuse of God invite?

21. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

22. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and *they shall be driven to darkness*.

In immediate connection with the closing thought of the verse preceding (no dawn of day shall ever break upon their night of gloom), the prophet proceeds: They shall traverse it

(the land) as men roaming about at their wit's end, in a fearfully *hard* condition and famished, with no bread for either body or soul, and under this gnawing hunger, they shall vex themselves, become excessively irritated and angry, and shall curse their king (Ahaz) as the cause of their trouble, and their God also whom their sins have provoked and whose wrath they dread, and they shall turn their faces upward, and then downward to the earth shall they look as men in perplexity turn every way to see some forth-breaking light; but lo! these men see only trouble and darkness; an exceeding straitness and pressure from which they can get no relief; and one is driven headlong into darkness. —The last clause has been construed variously. I prefer the construction given above, following the usage of the same words in Jer. 23: 12, "Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven forth," *i. e.*, into these slippery ways, "and shall fall therein." —Alas, how dark a doom is this of the wicked who will not have God for their light and salvation, but scorning his friendship and the guidance of his word, seek aid from the spirits of the dead, and never see the dawn of day again!

As bearing upon the doctrine of necromancy, an exhaustive discussion of these verses (19–22) would involve the following points:

1. Under the instigation of a prurient curiosity, or under the pressure of affliction, godless men are wont to seek knowledge and help from the spirits of the dead.

2. Hence, in every age of the world and in every nation of universal history, there have been necromancers, wizards, etc., known by various names, practicing various arts of divination and legerdemain; playing upon the credulity of men and women, and claiming access to superhuman knowledge and power. The spiritists of modern times are the latest species of this genus of necromancers.

3. This passage implies irresistibly that God frowns upon and condemns necromancy in whatever form.

4. The expostulations, rebukes and threatenings of the Lord, through his prophet in this passage, assume it to be impossible for man to get knowledge or help for the living from the dead. The *power* of God to send back to earth the spirits of the dead is entirely another thing; yet as to this the practical question is—Does he see fit to use it?

5. Hence, to discard the light of God's revealed word and to seek light and help from the dead, is to hurl one's self against the impermeable and impassable wall with which God has shut in the living of our world, and involves both positive conflict against God, and contemptuous rejection of his divine word.

6. As Satan has a natural sympathy with everything abhorrent to God and ruinous to man, we ought to look for his hand in these agencies of necromancy to whatever extent God may give him scope and range for action. What these limits may be, who can tell? It is man's true wisdom to keep himself utterly aloof from the sphere of Satan's agencies and temptations.

7. Necromancers and spiritists practically league themselves with Satan against God, and should be aware that his lot must be theirs and their end be as their works—no dawn of day ever breaking forth on the midnight of their gloom!

The general object of this commentary admits of the suggestion of these points as fully involved in the text; while it does not admit of their elaborate discussion.



## CHAPTER IX.

As already said, the subject of chapter 8 continues over into chapter 9, to the end of v. 7. Then follows a message which fills out this chapter and the first four verses of chapter 10, addressed to the kingdom of the ten tribes, variously named Jacob, Israel, and Ephraim.—The first seven verses in this chapter turn suddenly from darkness to light—from the gloom and trouble that pervaded the land, and especially the border districts on the north and east, to the glorious light that shall rise and shine over that same region in the days when King Messiah shall appear incarnate and reveal the riches of divine light and truth to those out-lying Galileans.—The next portion, sent to Ephraim, predicts unmingled calamity.

1. Nevertheless the dimness *shall* not *be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

The received translation fails to give the exact thought of the original which may be expressed thus: "But darkness shall not be [permanent] where this oppression lay; for as the former time dishonored and oppressed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the latter time shall greatly honor and bless those lands, even the way of the sea beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." The northern and eastern border tribes, including Zebulun and Naphtali on the west of Jordan and the two and a half

tribes on the east, had been held in low esteem, as being far from Jerusalem the honored center; less enlightened religiously, earlier and more apostate into idolatry, more exposed to the nation's foreign enemies (see 1 Chron. 5: 25, 26), and more corrupted by heathen families and tribes living among them. Deep traces of the same disesteem appear on the face of the New Testament history. See John 1: 46, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and 7: 52, "For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Also Matt. 26: 69, and Acts 2: 7.—Over this region the waves of the great Assyrian river had swept with terrible devastation; but it should not be always first in calamity and darkness. The latter time should reverse this law and give to that region distinguished honor, as the next verse proceeds to say.

2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

The subsequent verses, especially vs. 6, 7, compel us to explain this great light as that which rose upon those lands in the advent of the promised Messiah who was pre-eminently "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2: 32) and as said by Isaiah, "a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42: 6, and 49: 6). Such light, the true knowledge of God, brings the fruits of political as well as spiritual salvation, blessing society and the individual man, and therefore is properly antithetic to that darkness which had dishonored this same region, first through ignorance and sin, and then, by consequence, with political ruin. Jesus arose upon those out-lying tribes as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his beams" (Mal. 4: 2). There he began his public ministry, and as Matthew (4: 13-16) has testified, there he fulfilled this remarkable prophecy of Isaiah. "Jesus departed into Galilee and came and dwelt in Capernaum which is by the sea coast in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias," as here in our passage.—Quite in harmony with the laws of prophetic vision, the prophet speaks as if he saw this already past; "*have seen* a great light."

3. Thou hast multiplied the nation *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and* as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

To say "*not* increased the joy" is to gainsay what immediately follows, "They joy before thee as men rejoice in harvest gathering, or in the dividing of spoil." The first clause also, "hast multiplied the nation," is a promise of good and a matter of joy.—To avoid this incongruity, some have assumed a difference in the *time* of the two verbs, reading "Thou hast now multiplied

the nation whose joy thou *didst not* make great," i. e., the same nation whose joy before was very small. But if this had been the thought, we might expect it to have been made more clear by the use of adverbs of time. A better explanation changes the sense of the Hebrew word from "*not*" to "*to it*"—a change which does not alter the sound as we pronounce the Hebrew, and which only changes one letter for another of an analogous class (quiescents). Then it will read, "Thou hast multiplied the nation; thou hast increased joy *to it*, i. e., *its joy*; they rejoice before thee," etc. This change is suggested in the Hebrew margin.—This multiplying of the nation is not a natural growth of population, but is rather the great enlargement of the Christian Zion by the accession of the Gentiles. So the analogous prophecies indicate, especially Isaiah, 42: 1, 4, 6, and 49: 6–23, and many others.

4. For thou has broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

The connection and course of thought are, Well may they rejoice "*for* thou has broken the yoke of servitude imposed on his neck and the chastising rod (staff) inflicted on his back (shoulder), even the rod of his oppressor," as Gideon's little band under God broke the yoke of Midian. See Judges 7: 15–25.—The evils of sin appear under the figure of the yoke of a captive and of the scourge upon the back of an oppressed slave. Christ breaks every yoke.

5. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.

Carrying forward the same line of thought, the prophet adds yet another cause for the nation's joy. "For every war-shoe of the soldier who arms himself at the cry, *To battle!* and every garment rolled in human blood, shall be burned—the food of fire." All that belongs to war; the armor and the weapons of the soldier, and the garments drenched in the blood of the slain, shall be swept away with fire; and *War itself shall die!* Unfortunately the English translation misses the full sense and mars the exquisite beauty of this verse.—The Messiah abolishes all war; but not until his foes are either swept away by his judgments, or melted into penitence and won over to submission by his love. This prophecy looks at the glorious results—the annihilation of all that makes war a scene of horror.

6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder:



and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

From the effects and the results of Messiah's reign, the prophet comes to speak here specifically of the Messiah himself. A wondrous child is born to the race of man, all unique and peculiar; born a prince, to bear on his shoulder the insignia of supreme power (as the orientals wore a key upon the shoulder and modern occidentals, an epaulette, to indicate authority); "and his name shall be called" (*i. e.*, he shall *truly be*, and therefore shall be worthy to bear these significant names), "Wonderful" (for "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh"); "Counsellor" (for on him shall rest the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" etc., Isaiah 11: 2); "the Mighty God" (not a god in any inferior sense; but *the* Mighty God, Creator and Lord of all); "the Everlasting Father" (a name entirely applicable to him as the Creator of all worlds, and as being truly a Father to his people; existing moreover through all the depths of a past eternity, and onward through the cycles of an eternal future): also, "the Prince of Peace" (the glorious King whose reign shall be the consummation of peace and prosperity throughout this otherwise troubled and sin-cursed earth). Nor this only; but he gives peace, even a "peace that passeth all understanding" to those who are justified by faith in him (Rome 5: 1, Phil. 4: 7), and who abide in him with faith unflinching and love supreme.—"Everlasting Father," literally father of eternity, may mean either, existing eternally and in this sense one who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6: 16); or one who gives eternal life to his people.—This passage, bearing strongly on the divine nature of the Messiah, has of course been stubbornly contested by those who oppose this doctrine. For the most part the opponents of the Messianic interpretation suppose this "Son" to be Hezekiah, son and successor of Ahaz; but with what harshness and violence; with what torturing of words from their legitimate sense and with what utter disregard of the context both preceding and following, and also of numerous other parallel Messianic passages, it can scarcely be necessary to indicate more plainly. Did Hezekiah abolish all war, as is done by this personage (vs. 5, 6)? Was he in any proper sense the "Wonderful;" the "Counsellor;" the "Mighty God;" the "Everlasting Father;" the "Prince of Peace?" Can it be said of him, "Of the increase of his government and of the peace of it, there shall be no end?" etc., etc.

As to the history of criticism on this passage, the Jews for many ages referred it to the Messiah; until, rejecting Jesus



of Nazareth and pressed by Christian interpreters with the unanswerable points made here as applied to Him, they perverted this passage because they could not adhere to its obvious import and yet reject the Christian Messiah.

7. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The growth and the peace of his kingdom shall be without end. Sitting on the throne of his father David (the ancient theocracy being for the while the visible church and representing it in Hebrew prophecy) he rules it most wisely, in perfect righteousness, from henceforth onward, for ever and ever. The God who has promised is in earnest to perform, and will surely do it!

The angel who came to Mary (Luke 1: 32, 33) affirms these very things of the Son then to be born. "The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—Such is the tone of many other prophecies of the Messiah's reign. See Ps. 2, and 22; and 72, and 110. Isaiah elsewhere expands the same views of the magnificence, glory, purity, righteousness and peace of the Messiah's reign. See chapters 11, 49, and 60.—All these thoughts are grand and glorious. A reign so purely just, so benign, excluding from earth so entirely those great national sins which have been its curse for ages; a reign destined to endure so long, evermore fraught with blessings to the filling of earth's cup; what can be more magnificent; what can more completely fill out the answer to the divinely prescribed prayer, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven?"—The remarkably emphatic repetition of the idea of his ruling in righteousness, justice and real benevolence, suggests how fearfully the world has been *misgoverned*, and how little the great body of human government in even civilized nations has sought and practically secured the welfare of the millions. But Christ's reign shall right up all these cruel wrongs of earth!—The law of prophetic suggestion which links this forecast of Messianic light and peace, with the darkness of war's desolations, is manifestly that of *contrast*; the striking antithesis between the dark calamities which fell and lay so heavily on the border tribes during the great Assyrian invasions, and the glorious light which broke upon those long despised and benighted regions when the Son of God chose that as the first field

for his miracles of mercy and his words of grace. Such contrasts stand as witnesses that "man's extremity is God's opportunity"—that often it is but a short way from the depths of chastening calamity to the heights of glorious deliverance and salvation, and that God is wont to look for the most hopeless and forlorn to make them the subjects of his choicest visitations of mercy.

8. The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

9. And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,

10. The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them into* cedars.

Here commences a series of predictions of calamity upon the northern kingdom, continued through this chapter and the first four verses of chapter 10. The fourfold division, each portion closing with the words, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (vs. 12, 17, 21, and 10: 4), strongly implies that these judgments came in succession, the second sent because the first failed, and the third because the second proved unavailing, and so on till the cup was drained and the nation overwhelmed in final ruin.—V. 8 states that the Lord had previously sent a word for Jacob, referring (it would seem) to chapter 7: 8, which declared that within sixty-five years, Ephraim should be so broken as to be no more a people. That "it lighted upon Israel," is the same idea repeated in a parallel clause.—Hence (v. 9) all the people *have known* (better than "*shall* know"); they have known that God threatened to exterminate them if they persisted in their sin, and consequently were the more guilty in their self-reliant pride and stoutness of heart against God. A "stout heart" is one that boldly resists God and defies his threatenings. This people say, our land has indeed suffered severely from our foreign enemies; the Assyrian king (Tiglath-Pileser, 2 Kings 15: 29) has desolated many of our cities; but we can and will rebuild them in greater strength: we will have hewn stone next instead of sun-baked brick; the cedar for the sycamore; and then how easily shall we withstand our foes! Ah, they did not and would not consider how vain it is to fight against God, and how weak men are when God has departed from them!

11. Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together;

12. The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

“The adversaries of Rezin” were the Assyrians. They had already proved a formidable foe to Syria. With them the Lord would combine the old enemies of Israel, the Syrians on the north and the Philistines on the south and west; and then together they should devour Israel as with mouth wide open, to swallow her up.—But as these sore national inflictions did not turn the people to God, so his anger did not turn away, but his hand remained still outstretched for yet other and sorer inflictions. So after each successive stroke, God is wont to pause and take note of the moral effect, if any, that he may by all means arrest the process of chastisement at the earliest moment when once the results of penitence and humiliation are secured.

13. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.

14. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.

15. The ancient and honorable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail:

16. For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.

Because the people would not turn to Him who smote them to heal and to restore, therefore he will cut off from Israel in one day the greatest and the least; the highest in society and the lowest; and by implication, all the intermediate classes also.—The extremes are so described as to enhance the moral force of the threatening. None are too venerable in age or wisdom to be punished. The other extreme, being lowest by reason of their meanness in crime, can by no means be passed over. The head and the tail of the animal furnish the first figure; the palm-branch, lofty, and magnificent, on the one hand; and the bulrush, sending up its slender stalk from foul marshes on the other—supply the second. Applying the first figure, he makes the elders, men usually much respected, the head, but the prophet who teaches lies, the tail. This is of course the false prophet who pretends to bring messages from the Lord, but brings only lies. His meanness, hypocrisy, and falsehood, earn for him richly the disgrace and the curse which are here indicated.—Several other prophets, especially Jeremiah, had large and sore experience of the pernicious influence of false prophets.—It had been the ruin of Israel that their leading men had misled them, drawing them away from God. Consequently, the men

so misled, were swallowed up in destruction. The ancients and the false prophets (the head and the tail) had been the leaders; the masses, the led. One fearful ruin engulfed them all.

17. Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is a hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

“Young men” are probably thought of here as warriors. “No joy” means the opposite of joy—only grief, disappointment, and consequent indignation, and hence judgments to their ruin.—When he consistently can, the Lord delights to exercise his mercy toward the fatherless and widow. Hence to say that he can have no mercy on these classes is to say that no class can be spared, but that all must go down together beneath his terribly exterminating judgments. Hypocrisy, bold evil-doing, and out-spoken impiety, combine to show that the people are morally rotten—fearfully apostate from God in their whole heart and life.—After the judgments pertaining to this series, the Lord waited only till he saw there was no returning to a better life, and then resumed his inflictions.

18. For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.

Sinners extremely wicked, become self-destructive; society becomes too corrupt to exist. Sin is in its nature suicidal; wickedness burns up its victims. Our passage looks to this general law.—The figures in this verse conceive of sinners as briers and thorns, and as the dry foliage of the forest trees. Sin kindles its fires first at the bottom; the blaze ascending soon enwraps the whole mass in flames whose columns mount up like clouds of smoke.

19. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

Instead of “darkened,” Gesenius and some other critics say *burned*, in harmony with the parallel clause, the people shall be as the *food* of fire. The original word does not occur elsewhere.—The special judgment thought of, is probably the same which is brought out in the last clause, mutual slaughter;

every man taking his neighbor's life, and the land filled with violence.

20. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:

21. Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and they together shall* be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

This may be a figure, or it may be no figure, but a reality. In the straitness of siege and famine men might literally devour each other; or a man the flesh of his own arm. Yet the close connection of this verse with the one that precedes it favors the figurative construction, men taking each others' lives as a hungry man would snatch for food on every hand yet never be satisfied. Men become savagely greedy for the life-blood of their fellows! An awful picture is this indeed of the way in which the kingdom of Israel fell! An interregnum of nine years, a time doubtless of fearful anarchy, immediately preceded the reign of their last king Hoshea. It was then, probably, that this vial of judgment was poured out. Not only did the leading tribes in this northern kingdom arm against each other, Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim; but whenever this strife might subside, they both assaulted Judah. Of this Pekah was himself an instance. He had scarcely reached the throne by means of conspiracy and regicide, when he turned his arms against Judah. Remarkably, of the five last kings of Israel, four were usurpers, reaching the throne by conspiracy! This is a forcible comment on the statements made here in our text.

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## CHAPTER X.

THE first four verses close the series of sins described and judgments threatened in the case of the kingdom of Israel. The remaining verses (5-34) treat of the Assyrian king, his pride, his ambitious aspirations, his advance to attack Jerusalem, and his utter destruction. This prophecy suggested that recorded in chapter 11, the magnificent results of which gave occasion to the song of praise in chapter 12. Taken together in their natural connection, this series of prophecies is exquisitely grand and precious.

1. Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed;

2. To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless!

This is a woe denounced on those who frame wicked laws, to oppress the poor and defenseless. The decreeing of unrighteous decrees and the writing of the grievous enactments which they make, are essentially the same thing, the words for "decree" both the noun and the verb, meaning originally to *engrave* as on stone or plates of metal. This was the earliest manner of writing important documents, especially laws.—Wickedness is doubly aggravated when framed into law, because its mischief is made to fall on the poor and unprotected classes; because it affords a temptation to cruel, heartless men to oppress, providing for them the means of doing so with impunity; and because its mischiefs are more permanent. Wicked laws become a vast and powerful engine for oppression. No wonder that God who always befriends the helpless when wronged, should bring down his heaviest judgments on those who frame mischief into law. The Psalmist (94: 20) is amazed that such men should ever expect the sympathy of God; "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee—the throne which frameth mischief by law?" The great God having ordained civil government and law for the protection of human rights, let the men whom he elevates to the responsibility of administering it beware how they abuse their trust to pervert justice and to defeat the very ends which they are bound to secure! Can they hope to escape the fearful judgments of a righteous God?

3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation *which* shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?

4. Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

What will wicked law-makers do when God arises to visit upon them his righteous retribution?—"In the day when ruin comes from far"—is said with reference to invasion by a distant and powerful enemy. Where would they deposit for safety whatever they valued most, "their glory?" Forsaken of me ("without me") they shall either bow down under the yoke of bondage among the prisoners, or fall among the slain, their destiny being either captivity or death in battle.—Yet even this last visitation of judgment

fails to reclaim and therefore the uplifted hand of God still prepares to smite yet again.—The divine purpose in such inflictions of his rod being to reclaim, why should not his hand be again and again uplifted so long as the end is not attained, and there yet remains hope enough to justify another effort?—In the case of Ephraim the Lord had then reached a point where this hope itself failed; and then extermination followed; a dread warning to sinners not to abuse God's long-suffering discipline *too far!*

5. O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

I paraphrase this verse, "Woe to the Assyrian, who is the rod to execute my anger against Israel and Judah! The staff in their hand which gives them the power of accomplishment is my indignation against my guilty people." He has this great power only because I have occasion to use him as my instrument in chastising my apostate children.—"Woe" rather than "Oh," the word being the same as that which commences v. 1. The strain of the whole passage, vs. 5–34, is a *woe* on Assyria. There is no special pertinence here in rendering "O, Assyrian."

6. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

The word rendered 'hypocritical' has very commonly the broader sense of *wicked, apostate*. In this case the sin was not merely or mainly that of hypocrisy.—"The people of my wrath," the objects of my sore displeasure for their sins. The Assyrian king was actually sent of God against both kingdoms, and both seem to be contemplated in this connection.—The last clause takes the expressive form, "to make them a thing trodden under foot like the mire of the streets."

7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

8. For he saith, *Are not my princes altogether kings?*

9. *Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?*

*He* has no thought of doing the will of God and of being the Lord's humble servant in executing his wrath on a guilty nation. He thinks only of conquering many strong nations and merging them into tributaries to his kingdom to exalt the glory of his throne. This appears in what he says; "Are not my princes equal to kings? Are not the nobles of my court whom I make my regents and vicegerents as great as the kings of other nations?"



His "princes" may include some conquered kings, subjected to tribute, yet permitted to rule subordinately to himself. The higher the rank and state of his princes, the greater his own as their chieftain. He arrogates to himself the rank of "king of kings," a claim specially offensive to God because this is one of his own appropriate titles.—"Have I not subjected Calno even as I did Carchemish, and Hamath also as well as Arpad?" etc. Calno, supposed to be the Calneh of Gen. 10: 10 and the Canneh of Ezek. 27: 23, is said by the best ancient authorities (*e. g.*, the Targums, Eusebius and Jerome) to be the city Ctesiphon, on the east bank of the Tigris opposite Seleucia.—Carchemish, a city on an island in the Euphrates at the junction of the river Chaboras, known by the Greeks and Latins as Circesium, was famous in later times as the scene of the great decisive victory of Nebuchadnezzar over Pharaoh-necho (Jer. 46: 2, and 2 Chron. 35: 20).—Damascus would naturally fall before the Assyrian arms first; then Samaria.

10. As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;

11. Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

Idol gods were regarded by all idolaters as the patrons and defenders of their worshipers. To conquer the kingdom was therefore to master their gods. The Assyrian king boasted that he had subdued idol gods mightier than those worshiped in Samaria and Jerusalem; could he not therefore with the greatest ease subdue their inferior gods?—At this time he had subjected Samaria and her gods: would he not do the same to Jerusalem and to her gods?—The phrase, "My hand hath found the kingdoms" etc., uses "hand" as a symbol of power. I have found means to get my strong hand upon them and so have readily over-mastered them.

12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that*, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

In our English translation the thought is that when the Lord has finished his work of chastising the Jews, he will punish the pride and arrogance of the Assyrians. Another construction in some respects preferable is given by Alexander, thus: "But" (despite of these boasts) it shall come to pass that the Lord will suddenly cut short the Assyrian's career of conquest, just when he has reached Mt. Zion and Jerusalem; "yea,"



(saith the Lord) "I will punish the proud king of Assyria and bring down the glory of his high looks."——The Hebrew, verb, "hath performed," most naturally means, to *cut short abruptly*. Moreover, the whole work of God's judgments, wrought for him by the Assyrian, did not fall on Zion and Jerusalem. The larger part of it fell on the northern kingdom. Then it was precisely *at* Mt. Zion that the Lord arrested the career of the Assyrian king, as may be seen in vs. 32—34. Neither construction is bad.——"The fruit of his stout heart" are the things done at the instigation of his pride. The Lord never fails in due time to abase the proud.

13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:

14. And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: as one gathereth eggs *that are left*, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

The point made here is that, though the Assyrian was raised up and clothed with power by the Almighty for a special work of his own, yet he gave no glory to God, but took all glory to himself. In his pride he said, By the strength of *my* hand (not of God's), and by *my* wisdom (for I am very wise), have I achieved all these victories and subdued these great nations. By my own prowess and sagacity have I changed the boundaries of nations, throwing down the old and establishing the new at my supreme will. So have I robbed their treasures and put down their people like a valiant man as I am. Their choicest treasures I have taken without resistance, as one gathers forsaken eggs, without the annoyance even of the agonized mother-bird, shrieking and screaming in her grief. There was not even one such bird, fluttering on the wing around me, mournfully bewailing her loss. The figure is finely expressive, although the plundering act is savagely wanton and cruel, such as one can not love to contemplate, either in the figure or in the fact it here illustrates.

15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up *itself*, as if it were no wood.

How strange and irrational that a mere instrument should

boast and magnify itself over the agent who uses it! See how this would appear as between man and his instruments. Shall the axe show off itself in lofty pride over the man who hews with it? Or shall the saw make itself great over the man who drives it? As if the rod were to lift up and shake the man who lifts *it* and smites with *it*, or as if the staff were to toss up and swing in mid air the man himself who brandishes it!—In the English version of the last two clauses, the italic words harm rather than help the sense. The strange thing is not that the rod shakes *itself* against the man who lifts it, but that it shakes the *man himself*. So in the last clause, the staff according to the supposition (assumed for its absurdity) lifts up, not itself, but that which is *no wood*—the opposite of all wood; a living man, a conscious voluntary agent. There are several cases of this Hebrew use of the negative in a sort of privative sense to mean that which is directly its opposite; *e. g.*, Deut. 32: 21, 22. “They have moved me to jealousy with a *no-god*, i. e., with what is the very opposite of God; a mere *nothing*, a nonentity; precisely the opposite of the self-existent, all-present God. So I will move them to jealousy by a *no-people*; by those whom they have held in most sovereign contempt as nobody; viz., the Gentile nations. So Isaiah 31: 8, “The Assyrian shall fall by the sword of a *no-man*, of one who is the opposite of man, the mighty God. See notes on the passage.

16. Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

17. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day;

18. And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.

19. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

Therefore the Almighty God will terribly destroy this proud Assyrian king and people. Conceived of as fat men (fat being in their view associated with pride) God will send upon them leanness; conceived of under other figures as a forest full of foliage and a field rich in harvests, the Lord will kindle a fire underneath, and it will suddenly burn and devour all his foliage and fruits.—The “light of Israel” is the living God, as the revealer of truth and author of blessings. Note also the tacit antithesis between the relations of Jehovah to Israel, and to his enemies; to the former a light in the sense of a joy and a fountain of blessings; to the

latter a light in the sense of a consuming fire.—“Both soul and body;” in Hebrew, “from the soul even to the flesh”—is a proverbial phrase to indicate the whole of him, body and soul. —The last clause of v. 18 is now generally supposed to mean, “as when a sick man pines away.”—The remaining trees in his forest (after this conflagration) shall be so few that a child might write their number. In Hebrew thus: “The rest of his forest trees shall be a number, and a child will write them.” With the Hebrews “a number” is a few and “men of number” are a few men, easily numbered. See this phrase in Gen. 34: 30, and Deut. 4: 27, and 33: 6. In modern phrase “a number of men” is relatively large. Not so in ancient times.

20. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

After the Assyrian shall have slain or taken captive the people of the ten tribes, and shall have made fearful desolations in Judah, and after the Lord shall have terribly smitten the Assyrian for his pride and sin in these conquests, then the surviving remnant of Israel and Judah will have effectually learned the folly of leaning on such helpers. Then they will turn heartily to lean upon their own Jehovah. This was the lesson that the Lord sought to teach them, and not without hopeful results. He is often obliged to give his people lessons of the same sort to impress the same great truth.—“Stay upon” is used here in the almost obsolete sense of *relying upon*, in the trust of faith.

21. The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

The remnant spared through these fearful judgments now return penitently to their God. The words are the same which had become memorable in the name of Isaiah's son, *Shear Jashub*, *a remnant shall return*. Their significance was exceedingly precious. In the progress of the Lord's discipline and judgment upon his people, there will be some points where they are brought low and reduced to a very few. Yet then, this promise ever abiding, will be their comfort and hope. A remnant will survive and will return to the mighty God.

22. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

23. For the LORD God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

Though thy people, O Israel, have been as the sand of the sea, innumerable, yet a remnant only shall return, the great mass being cut off in judgment for their sins. The consumption (*i. e.*, destruction) determined upon in the plan of God, shall be accomplished in righteousness; shall abound throughout with manifestations of divine justice. V. 23 repeats this thought for the sake of emphasis.—In Rom. 9: 27, 28, Paul quotes this passage in an argument to show the Jews that a large portion of their nation were then doomed to be rejected and destroyed for their unbelief, and that the way would thus be opened for bringing Gentile nations into the Christian Church. The latter point was then incidental and not embraced originally in the words of Isaiah. The judgments which cut off myriads of the unbelieving Jews were a remarkable fulfillment of the general doctrine of this passage. It has been fulfilled often.

24. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

This verse connects itself logically with vs. 16–19. Inasmuch as the Lord is about to destroy the Assyrian hosts, *therefore*, O my people, be not afraid of them, etc. The Lord addresses especially his true and trustful people, yet perhaps not excluding any who lived within Jerusalem.—Though the Assyrian shall smite you with a rod, inflicting serious calamity upon your nation, yet as the sequel shows, this calamity will be transient.—The “staff,” like the “rod,” is a symbol of oppressive power. The Assyrian would lift it up over them in the spirit of Pharaoh of old, after the manner in which the Egyptians oppressed Israel with hard bondage.—Such were the facts. The king of Assyria “distressed Ahaz” (2 Chron. 28: 20), and evidently imposed tribute upon him, against which Hezekiah rebelled (2 Kings 18: 7), but was brought under tribute again (vs. 13–16).—In this first expedition of Sennacherib against Hezekiah, the sacred historian states that “Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them.” The Assyrian record of the same expedition has been brought to light within the present generation and affords a very remarkable confirmation of the sacred narrative. Perhaps some allowance should be made for national vanity, developing itself in exaggeration. This is the record found in the annals of Sennacherib.—“Because Hezekiah, king of Judah, would not submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power *I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about, I took and plundered a countless number, and from these places I captured*

and carried off as spoil two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mares, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude, and Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates so as to prevent escape.....Then upon this Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me the chiefs and elders of Jerusalem, with thirty talents of gold, and eight hundred talents of silver, and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty.....All these things were brought to me at Nineveh, the seat of my government, Hezekiah having sent them by way of tribute, and as a token of his submission to my power."

The discrepancy in the amount of silver (here eight hundred and in 2 Kings 18: 14, three hundred talents) may possibly be due to exaggeration in part, and probably in part at least to counting in more or less of the spoil, while the statement in Kings names the stipulated tribute.

25. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.

In this passage the word "indignation" may express either God's displeasure against his people, or his wrath against the Assyrians. If the latter, it ceases only in the sense of finding scope and, so to speak, expending itself in their destruction. I prefer the former construction, thus: "For after a very short time my indignation against my people ceases, and my wrath goes forth against the Assyrians to their destruction." The original is very concise and also indefinite, like this: "For after yet a little, indignation ceases and my wrath (is) toward their destruction."

26. And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod *was* upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

Such are God's judgments on Assyria. Two historical cases set forth their fearfulness; the slaughter of Midian before Gideon's small but chosen band, and the perishing of Egypt's hosts in the Red Sea. The rock of Oreb is specially named because two kings of Midian fell there, as Sennacherib was to fall in his idol-temple after his return home from the ruin of his vast army. (See Isaiah 37: 37). He had lifted up his rod over Judah; but God arouses a *scourge* (more than a mere "rod") for him. The last clause but one should rather be read, "and his" (Jehovah's) "rod is" (again as of old) "upon the sea, and he lifts it up," (now as then) "in the manner of Egypt;" i. e., as he lifted it up to

smite Egypt and whelm her hosts in the Red Sea.—The reader will note the manifest allusion to v. 24, where first the Assyrian lifts his rod over Judah after the manner of Egypt; while here, correspondingly, the Lord lifts his rod over the Assyrian in the same manner as over Egypt in the Red Sea.

27. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

The burden of Assyria's oppressive exactions and tyrannical rule shall be lifted from thy shoulder, etc., all plain.—But the last clause has perplexed critics generally. Gesenius says that the last word rendered "anointing" but meaning simply *oil*, alludes to the fat bullock of high temper who breaks the yoke and tears himself away. But another sense, equally legitimate to the very brief words of the original and better fitting the course of thought, comes from assuming an allusion to the consecration of Jewish kings to the Lord with anointing oil. Because they are thus sacred to God, no yoke shall remain long on their neck. At what moment they turn from their sins, divine mercy returns to them, and all foreign yokes are broken at once.

28. He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:

29. They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.

30. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth.

31. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.

From general predictions respecting the destruction of the Assyrian king, the prophet now comes to a very particular description of his advance upon Jerusalem, from the northern border of their territory until he comes within sight of the city turrets, and "shakes his hand" defiantly "against the mount of the daughter of Zion." The sketch is graphic and full of life, as if the prophet saw the Assyrian host moving onward and heard the outcries of panic and grief from the imperiled cities along the line of his march.—Striking the northern border at a point about N. E. from the great city, he is seen first at Aiath—the ancient Ai of the times of Joshua (chap. 7). He then passes Migron, a small city where Saul lay encamped (1 Sam. 14: 2), and there said to be "in the uttermost part of Gibeah." Next he is at Michmash, the modern Mukhmas, where he deposits his heavy baggage and stores, proba-

bly because of the difficult ground lying between him and the city, and perhaps that the army might move with the greater celerity to effect a surprise. This Michmash figures conspicuously in the daring exploits of Jonathan and his armor-bearer against the Philistines (1 Sam. 13: 2, 5, and 14: 5, 31). It was very near the famous "passage," spoken of here in v. 29, a narrow defile or gorge through which an army could pass only with great difficulty and slowly. Next the prophet sees them already through this mountain pass and lodging for the night at Geba.—At this point in the description, the prophet turns from naming the places touched in the line of his march to describing the effects on the cities lying adjacent. It now becomes a life-scene.—Ramah, on the hill, a half mile west from Geba and on his right, is afraid; Gibeah of Saul, on the opposite side of the valley, over against Michmash, flees for safety. The sympathies of the prophet are moved by this spectacle, and he (perhaps almost unconsciously) gives them utterance: "Lift up thy shrill voice (in terror), O daughter of Gallim; listen, O Laishah; Ah, poor Anathoth!" —Critics differ slightly on some nice points here; but the general sense is clear.—All Madmenah has gone, the people forsaking their homes and city; the inhabitants of Gebim make haste to escape with their effects, hurriedly removing all they can to a place of safety.—A few of these places have entirely disappeared, but the locality of most of them has been satisfactorily identified, especially by Drs. Robinson and Smith, as may be seen in their Biblical Researches, Vol. II., 109–151.

32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand *against* the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Nob is doubtless the very city of the priests, which Saul through Doeg, destroyed (1 Sam. 21 and 22). The Targums and Jerome say it was within sight of Jerusalem. It must therefore have been on the northern spur of the Mount of Olives; but no trace of it has been discovered in modern times. Here, for a day, the Assyrian halted, perhaps to concentrate his forces for the anticipated assault of the city. Here, in proud defiance, he shook his fist at the temple and city of the living God, now in his vain thought already within his easy grasp. Ah, he did not think of the mighty God who was there!

33. Behold, the LORD, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled.

34. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.



In bold, poetic imagery these verses give the final catastrophe; the wondrous and thrilling fact that just when the great Assyrian army lay within sight of the temple spires, then "the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand men, and when they arose in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses" (Isaiah 37: 36). Such was the slaughter on that one awful night! The prophet conceiving of this Assyrian host as a forest of towering cedars of Lebanon, sees the Lord Jehovah of Hosts come down with his great iron death-weapon to lop the boughs terribly, to hew down the loftiest cedars and lay low the proudest—cutting down all the thick undergrowth with his iron blade, and causing Lebanon with all its glory to fall before his mighty arm. The last word somewhat favors the idea of a strong Archangel, sent forth with his huge iron scimeter to mow down the cedars of Lebanon as the mower lays low the grass of his meadow. Whether we suppose angelic agency or not, here is the great and dreadful God sweeping down the myriad hosts of Assyria before his uplifted arm. But yesterday, they were moving on proudly, even as Lebanon lifts up her lofty head and glories in her cedars: to-day their camp is strewn with corpses of the fallen dead, for this proud king had hurled defiance at the city and temple of the Lord, and he had taken up the challenge and hurled back his shafts of death into that Assyrian camp! The work is done and the city and people of the great God are safe! Now, "what shall one answer the messengers of the nations" who come to inquire into this wonder of the ages? This—"That the Lord hath founded Zion and the poor of his people shall trust in it" (Isaiah 14: 32). Or in yet another graphic portrayal of the same scene from the same prophet; "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters," as if with mighty inundation they would overwhelm and sweep away our holy city; "but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing (mere thistle down) before the whirlwind. Behold, at eventide, trouble; but before the morning, nothing of him! This is the portion of them that would spoil us—the lot of them that would rob us" (Isaiah 17: 13, 14).—It need not surprise us that this event, whether seen with prophetic eye in the future, or with the naked eye in the passing present, or with eye reflexed upon the historic past, should give the loftiest and sweetest inspirations to the soul of such a man as Isaiah. It is not strange that he returns to it again and again, as the great, the crowning interposition of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in that age of national peril, deliverance, repentance and reformation. It *was* an age of momentous issues, and it may well be the joy of his people in all ages that God came forward promptly and so visibly to meet



those issues, to bear such testimony to his power to save, and to set forward with most vigorous impulses the great work of his servants in bringing back the nation to the God of their fathers. —Turning back for a moment to note more fully some points respecting this approach of the Assyrian army, let the reader observe the topographical accuracy of the description. A few of these names of places have entirely disappeared; the greater part, embracing all the places of most importance, are readily identified to-day. Dr. Robinson, writing on the very ground, says: "The route itself is very distinctly traced, and we were able, in great measure, to follow it out. Of the probable sites of Ai and Geba I have already spoken" (as identified), "and we ourselves visited Michmash, Gibeah of Saul, Ramah and Anathoth. Of the other places mentioned no farther trace remains. Migron must have been situated somewhere between Deir De-wan and Michmash; Gallim and Laish, Madmenah and Gebim were probably further south, and nearer to Anathoth."—Bib. Res., Vol. II., 149.—These travelers represent the face of the country along this route as rough, its hill sides so steep that repeatedly they found it necessary to dismount and lead their horses. In view mainly of these precipitous hills and the extreme difficulty of moving an army over them, some have doubted whether the Assyrians actually approached by this route. They would say, "We may conceive the prophet standing in vision on the walls of Jerusalem, and looking toward the quarter from which the invasion was to come, enumerating certain intervening points without intending to predict that he would really pass through them." Alexander's Isaiah, page 211. This explanation is admissible as a bold conception of the spirit of this scene, at once poetic and prophetic. According to the history (Isaiah 36 and 37), Sennacherib sent his deputies to Jerusalem twice for the very purpose of intimidating the people and their rulers into submission. This was adapted in itself to produce the panic which this passage delineates. The precise locality of Sennacherib's army at the time of its destruction remains in doubt. Fortunately this point is by no means vital to the moral instruction of the grand event.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE glorious truth which links this chapter to the preceding one is well expressed under this figure. God's enemies fall like forest trees, never to rise again; but God's people, cut down,

spring up again with new vigor and a more heavenly growth. Assyria's proud cedars fall with a fearful and final crash; but the tree of David, though cut back to the stump of Jesse, starts again for a nobler life. A divine vitality is in it. The cause of God can never die!—Such is the law of contrast which engrafts this chapter so beautifully upon the closing sentence of the last. A rod out of the stem (stump) of Jesse springs up; it proves to be a most extraordinary personage, none other than the oft and long promised Messiah. We have his intrinsic qualities of wisdom, knowledge, and piety; his intuitive discernment and appreciation of character; the perfect justice of his administration; the fraternal peace and love which consequently ensue; the knowledge of the Lord pervading the earth and excluding sin and evil from his realm. This rod of Jesse becomes a rallying point for the nations; they come to Messiah's feet; his resting place and home in this wide earth become all glorious. The people of God wander in captivity, no more. His dispersed ones are re-gathered; they live in mutual love, and no more in jealous rivalry; they combine against their common foes; the Lord is with them in glorious help for victory as of old in his miracles of power, and Zion, everywhere triumphant, reposes under the sheltering wing of her Redeemer.—There can be no doubt that this description sets forth the great Messiah's reign; that the rod from the stem of Jesse is Jesus the son of David. Every attempt to interpret the passage otherwise must needs confront the whole array of Messianic prophecies, explaining them all away, or denying their validity and inspiration; must make the great points affirmed here nugatory and ignore their apt and perfect fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, the Messianic interpretation of this chapter is fully sustained by the tenor of all other Messianic prophecies. The points made here apply to no one else—never have been or can be fulfilled in any other than the Messiah.

1. And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The words rendered "rod" and "branch" are neither of them the same Hebrew word translated "branch" in Isaiah 4: 2, and Jer. 23: 5, and 33: 15, and Zech. 3: 8, and 6: 12. They have however the same meaning. In the progress of prophetic usage, these rare words of Isaiah were dropped and the other \* came into general use.—It may be asked, why this allusion to Jesse rather than to David? I answer, the name of David would have suggested royalty and dignity, a high rather than a low estate. The object here was to present the cause of God as rising from the lowest point of prostration; as emerging from obscurity,

allying after defeat, coming up out of the depths of depression. At the hour of the human birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, how weak in the eye of mere sense was he! How small a thing was that germ of being and how frail! So in the loins of Jesse, within the same small village of Bethlehem, lay the germs of those exalted powers of wisdom, prowess and regal efficiency, which were soon developed in the person and the reign, first of David, then of Solomon. This analogy lies, half latent, under this allusion to "the stem of Jesse."

2. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

The precise thought here is that the Spirit of the Lord, resting upon Jesus the Messiah, will cause him to have wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and piety. His perfect endowments for ruling well are to be ascribed to the Spirit of God which dwelt in him without measure.—That the Divine Spirit was thus given to Jesus Christ is the doctrine both of Old Testament prophecy and of New Testament history. In Isaiah 61: 1, the Messiah himself says (prophetically), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," etc., which prophecy Jesus read publicly in the synagogue and applied it, saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 17-21). Of this fact John the Baptist also is a special witness (John 1: 32, and 3: 34), testifying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."—This grouping of terms descriptive of the qualities of a great and good king, wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord, should be taken as comprehensive of all valuable qualities for that sphere. All knowledge and the skill to use it wisely; the executive power to accomplish all that perfect wisdom may devise; and last of all, a living piety, that deep and honest fear of the Lord with which all true wisdom begins—these attributes and qualities fit him supremely to be the great King and Deliverer of this fallen world.

3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.

The original word rendered, "make him of quick understanding," refers properly to the sense of smell, considered both as a sense of quick and acute perception, and as a source of pleasure through agreeable odors. The thought as ex-

pressed by the figure is that when the senses of sight and hearing fail, the sense of smell, sharp and acute, gives a new power of discernment, and also of blended enjoyment. The ultimate meaning I take to be that his perceptions are intuitive, looking directly into the souls of men, and in no wise dependent as those of the best human rulers must be, on the testimony of the senses. A higher sense than sight or hearing; a sense analogous to that of smell, yet indefinitely above it, fits him to read men's hearts, and so to administer justice perfectly. It also, for the same reason, fits him at once to know and to enjoy the sincere love and homage of his friends.

4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

The word rendered "reprove," parallel with "judge," means properly to *decide causes* which are supposed to be before him for trial. He decides equitably the cause of the meek.—The "rod of his mouth" and the "breath of his lips," are thought of as the terrible and effective instruments with which he "smites" and "slays"—probably to denote the infinite ease with which he controls and punishes the mightiest of his foes. As in the work of creation "he spake and it was done;" so here, a breath from his lips suffices to slay the wicked. The sentence that goes forth from his mouth becomes itself a rod to smite the earth.—The oldest Jewish interpreters assume that the phrase "the wicked," refers specially to the great antichrist—the final and chief manifestation of supreme wickedness. It may be that Paul had this tradition in his mind when he wrote of "that wicked One, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thes. 2: 8). Doubtless this mighty King of Zion will consume that last and greatest of his foes with infinite facility, even as all his antecedent foes have fallen before him.—The reader will notice, here as elsewhere, that the glory of Messiah's reign lies, not in its external pomp and splendor, not in its parade and display, not in the magnificence of its surroundings, nor in any of those arts that minister to beauty and taste; but in its intrinsic and perfect justice; in protecting the defenseless; in fulfilling the sublime ends of all good government, human or divine, viz., to secure the highest possible well-being by putting down injustice and oppression, and by guarding sacredly the equal rights of all.

6. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The same thought lies here under a new figure by which

qualities of character appear as the clothing which invests the person. The girdle was prominent in the oriental dress, often made more so by ornament. That the girdle should be righteousness and faithfulness corresponds to "putting on charity," "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ," or "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," etc., etc.

6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them.

7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.

The primary sense of these statements is very plain.—As the verb rendered "dwell" means, not to dwell in general but rather to *sojourn* as a guest, we must think of the lamb as taking the wolf into his fold as a friend, and making him at home in his own house. The calf, the young lion, and the fatling (the last named a specially tempting morsel or meal for a lion), shall lie down lovingly together. The cow and the bear feed on the same food, just as the lion eats straw like the ox. The flesh-eating animals have changed their nature and their habits, and become grass-eating. The sucking child, reckless of all danger, plays on the hole of the asp (the fond mother finds it unharmed); even the most venomous of the serpent race have strangely become harmless.—Respecting these statements two leading questions arise, viz.: (1.) To what dispensation or economy of things in our world do they apply? (2.) Are they to be taken literally or figuratively?—We shall master the whole subject most easily if we inquire—I. Do they legitimately apply to the Messiah's reign in the gospel age, and if so, are they to be construed as literal or as figurative?—II. Can they be fairly and rightly applied to a paradise regained in some future and sinless state of our world?

I. These statements respecting the animal races must apply legitimately to the gospel age in this world, because all the statements that precede and follow (being parts of the same whole) must be and are so applied. King Messiah coming up from the frailty and weakness of infancy, baptized unto power by the Spirit of God resting upon him; then ruling in justice and righteousness and faithfully befriending the poor:—all these features belong to this world and to the present state of existence. And

so of those that follow throughout this chapter. They all contemplate a world full of depraved human nature, awaiting moral regeneration through the gospel. Therefore, these statements respecting the wolf and the lamb; the lion, the bear, and the asp; must legitimately refer to this same world and to the same depraved and mortal state in it. —Applying them thus, they should naturally be construed figuratively, not literally, as teaching a moral change in depraved human hearts, and not involving a physical change in the animal races. It should be carefully noted that these statements, *taken literally*, involve a radical change in the physical constitution of the carnivorous animals. Such constitutional changes have never appeared in this world since its creation. All the animal races are adapted with infinite wisdom to each other and to the world they live in. There is therefore the strongest presumption against supposing that such physical changes can occur while this world in its present order stands; and therefore the presumption is very strong against such an interpretation of the passage as would involve this change. —Yet again, the entire drift of thought both before and after these verses (6–8) is of moral and not of physical changes; pertaining to the influence of wise and righteous government over moral agents (vs. 3–5), and to the renewing influence of knowing God (v. 9). Hence, if we construe this passage (vs. 6–8), in harmony with the context, we shall make it figurative, representing a moral change in the hearts of men, somewhat analogous to the supposed change (understood literally) in the wolf, the lion, and the asp. —Yet, again, these verses stand here to account for what immediately follows: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.” But the logical connection here, the reason why men no longer work evil in the earth, is *not* that lions eat straw; is not that wolves dwell with lambs *literally*; but *is* that the savage and ferocious spirit in man’s bosom has turned to love, and that human selfishness is slain by the gospel of Jesus. The true knowledge of God fills all the earth, and therefore, man, made by creation intelligent and moral, and now by his second birth, brought under the legitimate influence of knowing God, lives lovingly with all of human kind, even as the animal races might live harmlessly together, supposing them to have lost not only the instincts and the necessities of a carnivorous life, but even the power of subsisting upon animal flesh. But no amount of diffusion of the knowledge of God can *literally* change the digestive organs of the lion to live on straw. The logical connection of thought, therefore, and the nature of the case demand the figurative construction and forbid the literal.

II. Our second question: Can these verses be fairly and rightly applied to a paradise regained in some future and sinless state

of our world? assumes that there may be such a state in which all traces of sin and of its fruits and concomitants shall have disappeared; in which the lower animals are "delivered from the bondage of corruption" and shine forth in the "glorious liberty of the children of God," their very natures changed so that they not only shall not but can not prey upon one another, and they shall eat grass like the ox, because constituted like him for such food and for no other.

This view has found some able advocates. Comparing these statements with the peculiar, not to say the mysterious intimations of Paul, in Rom. 8: 19-23, they have seen here (as they suppose) a grand prophecy of a new birth, for not man alone, but for the lower animal races as well; all living together with physical constitutions adapted to a sinless world, and no longer under the bondage of corruption.

Of this theory I remark—1. We load our text with more than it can legitimately carry, if after proving it to be figurative and to teach therefore that selfish ferocity in human hearts has been supplanted by the gospel, we also give it a burden of literal significance to carry besides, making it teach that lions will eat straw and wolves accept the offered hospitality of lambs. The good, common sense of sound interpretation forbids us to make the same statement, both figurative and literal.—2. Yet, again, too little is revealed respecting this supposed future paradise on this earth to justify any positive opinions. Are the same animals as well as the same animal races to live again, by a special resurrection from the dead? Or is it meant only that the same races are reproduced, with only the change from a carnivorous to a graminivorous constitution, and consequently *from* ferocity and blood, to fraternity and kindly sympathy? Are these animal races a portion of the inhabitants of the heavenly state in this regenerated earth?—No doubt they have suffered much from the hands of cruel men, much (perhaps we might say) from physical constitutions adapting them to a world of sin, ferocity, and death; but who knows whether God has reserved for them a retributive compensation for these sufferings—some deliverance from this "bondage of corruption" into "a liberty" analogous to that of God's redeemed children? Who has any adequate revelation on these points! Until such revelation shall appear, let none assume to be wise above what is written!

9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledgo of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The first clause affirms in other and less figurative language what had been really meant in the three next preceding verses.



The wolf in fraternal fellowship with the lamb is a symbol of the marvelous transformation wrought in persecutors and blasphemers when like Saul of Tarsus, "behold they pray!" and soon "preach the faith which once they destroyed." Our translators in their choice of the words, "hurt and destroy," involved precisely this tacit allusion to the former habits of wolves and lions as if they intended to shade off the sense gradually from the figure to the reality. The Hebrew verbs might as well have been rendered "they" (*i. e.*, men indefinitely), "shall no more work evil and destruction," the first verb meaning to do wrong and work mischief, while the second carries the accessory idea of moral corruption. "Hurt" and "destroy" apply naturally to the mischief done by ferocious animals.—"In all God's holy mountain," is primarily in the temple mountain where the people of God convened for worship. Hence it meant *then* the ancient Jewish church, but in the gospel age, the whole church which, as here contemplated, has filled all the earth. The thought is that men have learned in God's holy mountain to live in love and peace.—The reason why they no more hurt or destroy is now given plainly, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of" (literally, of knowing) "the Lord, as the waters fill the sea." This knowledge must be every where, pervading the once dark places, so that there shall be no fastnesses, no caves, no deep recesses of island or continent, where men shall not know God.—Here let us note that knowing God is precisely the moral antidote of sin. When God comes near to man to make his character and relations known and his very presence felt, there comes with him a power mightily antagonistic to all sin. Especially is this true of God as revealed in Christ. And since this description relates to the gospel age and to the reign and manifestations of King Messiah, we must assume that the knowledge of God here contemplated is precisely that which comes to our world through Christ, revealing God. The idea, therefore, is that when they come under the power of such manifested love as shines forth in the Son of God living and dying, their hearts, moved and melted by such manifestations, will cease to love sin. They will no more hurt or destroy one another. How can sinners, redeemed and saved by such love as this, turn back to hurt and destroy their brother sinners for whom, as for themselves, the same dear Savior has bled, and whom, as really as themselves, he loves and cherishes as his own sons and daughters? Verily the mightiest forms of moral power ever known lie in this love of Christ as our common Lord and Savior. When the earth becomes full of such knowing of God in and through Jesus Christ, the spirit of wrong and outrage in man toward his brother must disappear utterly and forever.—Let our souls be grateful and joyful for this moral power of knowing God in



the gospel of his Son. Let us praise him for this promise of its wide and rich diffusion over all the earth! For in that day there shall be no more "dark places of the earth, full of habitations of cruelty." When all dark places become radiant with the knowledge of God as it shines in the face of Jesus, cruelty will find no home or dwelling there.

10. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

The word rendered "root" means here a shoot springing up from the root. The same usage appears in Rev. 22: 16, "I am the root, even the offspring of David." Both passages refer to the Messiah as born in the line of Jesse and David. An "ensign," properly a flag pole or signal to be seen from far, is here supposed to be lifted up for a rallying point and a trumpet-call to the nations to gather to this standard. The Gentiles come, not "seek" only, but *come* to it. "Seek unto it" implies an actual coming. The place of Messiah's home and throne where he *rests* is all glorious. The Hebrew puts it strongly: *is glory*.

11. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

As the gathering of the Gentiles to Christ is prominent in v. 10, so is that of the Jews in this v. 11. Thought of as scattered in their dispersions as of old over Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea and other remote regions the Lord restores them a second time as at the first from their captivity in Babylon, only that here the restoration and gathering are specially *unto Christ*. Both the case of the Gentiles and the whole drift of the chapter require this view of their restoration.

In this list of countries, Egypt and Assyria come first as being the greatest hostile kingdoms known to the Jews of Isaiah's time. At the dispersion, many Jews went to Egypt; the whole kingdom of the ten tribes were borne to Assyria.—Pathros is the southern part of Egypt; Cush, mainly Ethiopia, including perhaps the Arabian Cush from which the African family of that name descended and emigrated.—Elam was the largest province of ancient Persia. Shinar included Babylon. Hamath lay on the north of Palestine; here comprehending Damascene Syria. "The islands of the sea," were the lands reached by crossing the Mediterranean, whether insular or continental.—This enu-

meration of all the great countries known to the Jews of that age involves the idea of universality. Wherever they may be, the gospel of the grace of God will find and restore them.—That this restoration is figurative and spiritual is made entirely clear by the general tenor of the context both preceding and subsequent. For v. 13 can not possibly contemplate the literal Ephraim and Judah, since Ephraim is known no longer, and has not been known in history since the sixth year of Hezekiah. Then according to Isaiah's own prediction, it was so entirely subverted as to be no more a people (chap 7: 8). Neither can v. 14 be taken literally, for those nations have long since ceased to exist. Nor can we reasonably suppose that the Lord will literally annihilate the tongue of the Egyptian Sea (vs. 15, 16), or smite the Euphrates into seven streams for his people to pass over. These were all historical allusions. Taken figuratively, they fill up the costume beautifully and forcibly; but taken literally they utterly subvert the sense of the passage. The same argument has been made upon vs. 6-8 in the preceding context. Hence, consistency demands the figurative construction in this v. 11 as well.

12. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

This verse essentially repeats the thought of vs. 10 and 11; first the gathering of the nations (Gentiles) to Christ, and next, the dispersed Jews. The order, the Gentiles first, is that of Paul also, in Rom. 11: 11-27.

13. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

Amity and fraternity will rule in all hearts. Brotherly love will abound and shut out all envy and hate. This thought is put strongly by an historical allusion to the long standing antipathy between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah, which developed itself with fearful intensity between the rival kingdoms. Judah, the foremost and strongest tribe, found an early and envious competitor in Ephraim, the next in population and strength. Traces of this spirit appear before the revolt; but this passage refers mainly to that era. During almost the entire national life of these rival kingdoms, the envy of Ephraim was strong. She was a stubborn and almost implacable adversary of Judah. Hence the prophet seizes upon this historic fact, then fresh in the minds of his people, to show that no such spirit will

exist in the future kingdom of the Messiah.—“The adversaries of Judah” were not those in Judah who were adverse to Ephraim, but those in Ephraim who were adverse to Judah. Hence three of the four clauses in this verse affirm respecting Ephraim; only the fourth and last, respecting Judah. Probably the sin was more on the side of Ephraim than of Judah.

Assuming that the Samaritan community were the successors of Ephraim, this envy was still no less rancorous in the times of Ezra and of the Christian era. The promise of our text has had no adequate fulfillment yet; nothing *in kind* save in the law of Christian fellowship and love which demands that Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall be *one* in Christ. It may surely be hoped [and expected] that this prediction will reach the rivalry of Christian sects and abolish it, so that the Savior’s prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17: 21), may be answered in the outer life as well as in the inner spirit of his people. Let us joyfully count this among the blessed things of the Savior’s perfected reign among his people in the Millennial age.

14. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them.

Instead of devoting their strength to fratricidal conflict, they combine against the common enemy. To express this idea, the prophet naturally resorts again to historic allusions, taking his hearers back to scenes yet fresh in their minds, when the Philistines fought Israel with desperate and tenacious spirit, and “the men of the East,” Midian especially, came up to cover the land as grasshoppers for multitude. Now Judah and Ephraim, united as one man, come down upon the coasts of the Philistines like the eagle in his swoop for his prey, and together they spoil the children of the East who had so often come up over Judah for spoil. This mode of war has been characteristic of the Arab tribes in all ages.—The words “*fly upon*” express the habit of birds of prey who pounce from aloft upon their victims.—By “shoulders” is probably meant the sides, borders of their country. The original bears this sense.—They lay their hand *in strength* upon Edom, etc. These were precisely the nations nearest to the Israelites and most frequently in war against them during the ages of the judges and kings, even down to the times of Isaiah. But they are all long since extinct, and hence, if for no other reason, we are forbidden to think of a literal sense in this language. And this being of necessity figurative, the rest of the passage (vs. 11-16) must be figurative also.

15. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue

of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dry-shod.

Not only do all his people unite against the common enemy but the Lord appears gloriously for their help. Here again (as before) historic allusions furnish the illustration. The "Egyptian Sea" is the Red Sea, on the north-eastern border of Egypt. Its "*tongue*" is that arm or bay which sets up from the Arabian Gulf in a north-western direction, across which and near its north-west extremity, the children of Israel passed on dry land. The word rendered "utterly destroy" means primarily to *deseccate and doom* by a perpetual curse, and then as a natural consequence to *destroy*. As God removed the obstacles to Israel's egress from Egypt by rolling back those waters, so now he will annihilate them, and open an unobstructed passage for his people. In like manner, the Euphrates, (here as often meant by "*the river*"), the Lord will smite into seven [very many] streams, and thus enable his people to pass over "*with sandals*," meaning dry-shod. The agency of God is made more prominent here by adding, "with his mighty wind will he shake his hand over the river." The Red Sea was driven back by a strong wind all that night (Ex. 14: 21).—It would not be safe to infer from this that God will return to physical miracles to set forward the Messiah's kingdom. We might as well argue from this chapter that he will arm his people with the sword as he did Israel of old against the Philistines. This passage does however point to extraordinary developments of Jehovah's power, in part no doubt through the agencies of his providence, but especially (we may presume) through the mission of his Spirit. This presumption is amply warranted by the great fact that the gospel age is distinguished by the Spirit's presence, and was consecrated at its outset by his sublime Pentecostal effusions. Whatever his cause may need, God is both mighty and faithful to grant. It behooves us to understand that this divine agency is the very power needed to convert both Gentiles and Jews.

16. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

This verse seems to refer to v. 11, and to say that this return of his people from their wanderings will be facilitated as of old, when God made a highway for Israel through the Red Sea and through that "vast, howling wilderness." So will he take obstacles out of the way of his people and bring them back with ease and joy to their Redeemer.

## CHAPTER XII.

Nothing could be more appropriate than to follow such a prophecy with a song of praise. Every impulse of the Christian inspires him to break forth in outbursts of song, ascribing glory, honor and praise to the blessed God for such deliverance to Zion, such triumphs to the kingdom of Christ, and such salvation to this lost world!—Fitly and beautifully God's people are not only exhorted to sing and give praise, but the very words for their song are provided. In vs. 1, 2, 6, Zion is personified as if one person, of one heart and voice; while in vs. 4, 5, the plural number suggests that Christians do not lose their individuality, however much they blend their hearts and voices in the unison of praise.

1. And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

"In that day" (when these great blessings shall have fully come) "thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise" [*i. e.*, acknowledge] "thee," as their gracious author and giver.—The translation, "*Though* thou wast angry," gives the ultimate sense not badly, and yet the precise reading from the original is, "*for* thou wast angry with me; but thine anger is turned away." etc. The Christian's heart will not complain that God *was* angry since conscious sin gives so just cause for it. We could not love and honor God if he had not been offended with our former sins. But it is special cause for praise when after repentance God forgives, and turning his anger away, gives his loving and comforting smile instead.—The "turning away" of his anger suggests that oft repeated declaration (chap. 9: 12, 17, 21 and 10: 4). "For all this, his anger is *not* turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." "The former things have passed away."

2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Behold, God is my salvation. He shows this now most abundantly, and my soul shall believe it henceforth and forever. Now, therefore, I will trust, and will fear no more. So many promises have been fulfilled, I never can doubt his love and faithfulness again. For the Lord Jehovah is my *strength*, achieving all these great things for me. Truly, therefore, he shall be my song, the theme of my praise evermore!—The Hebrew for Jehovah is *Jah*, which however is only a contraction for Jehovah, used perhaps for variety in a case of repetition for the sake of intensity.

3. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Drawing water from wells of salvation is a rich and lively image of perennial blessings from God, the ever living fountain. How free, and O, how precious! In that half tropical climate, so many months rainless, yet so genial and desirable if only water were supplied abundantly; there living water means all that men can need. "Wells" are supposed to be unfailing, never dry.

4. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

Starting afresh with the prolific theme of praise, the events of "that day"—blessings so great and rich—ye shall all say, Praise the Lord. Let all the nations know what he has done. *Remind* them (the sense of the last verb); remind them that his name is exalted, that he has glorified it by fulfilling so signally all his good words of promise to his people.

5. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

"Excellent things." The original gives the sense of what is lofty, towering high, surpassingly grand and glorious.—The last clause would be better if read, "*Let this be known* in all the earth." And why not? Let every creature hear the glad tidings and so join intelligently in this great song of universal praise.

6. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Let every dweller in Zion lift his voice to its highest note in praise and grateful adoration, for the Holy One of Israel has shown himself great in the midst of her.—There is a precious fitness in all the points made in this sweet song. When these

magnificent promises shall have been fulfilled, when the sons of Zion shall gather round the smoking ruins of Satan's kingdom and joyfully cry, Babylon the great *is fallen*, IS FALLEN! her idol gods are prostrate, her abominations have come to an end and shall curse the earth no more; the old haunts of pollution are consecrated to purity; hatred gives place to love; darkness has fled before the pure light of heaven, and the knowledge of God fills all the earth; men learn war no more; "one song employs all nations," and the one only name of Jesus, high above every name, commands the love and homage of all the living: O then, indeed, the holy of earth will take up this song of praise and pour it forth from hearts that mean more than words can utter! They will feel that they have abundant reason. If men should not praise God then, would not the very stones cry out?



### CHAPTER XIII.

WITH this chapter commences a new series of prophecies, filling chapters 13-23, described by the prophet himself as "burdens" and "woes," i. e., predictions of calamity to come upon wicked nations for their great sins. Critics differ somewhat as to the precise sense of the word "burden" when used to designate a class of prophecies, some giving it the general sense of oracle or announcement; while others give it the specific sense of a message which predicts evil. The latter view is best sustained by etymology and by usage.—This series opens with Babylon, the fall of which is the theme of chap. 13, and of chap. 14: 1-23.—This prophecy of the fall of Babylon is very extraordinary in several respects. (1.) In the point of its moral relations and bearings upon the Jews of Isaiah's time, it stands remarkably disconnected. In chap. 13 there is not the least hint of any special relation to the Jews. But chap. 14 opens with a clear intimation of divine mercy to Israel in restoring them to their own land after their captivity in Babylon, and also in reversing the recent relation of captor and captive between these two people, bringing Babylon under as Israel had been before. This assumes an ideal present far down into the

period of the captivity, the close of which was one hundred and ninety-two years after the death of Ahaz.\*—The precise date of this prophecy against Babylon is not given but it stands in the collection among others of the time of Ahaz, and therefore probably belongs there legitimately. See chap. 14: 28. Hence we have ground for making the interval between the prophet's actual and his ideal present, as above, nearly two hundred years. The facts revealed concerning the fall of Babylon have therefore no particular relation to the actual present of Isaiah's time. Babylon had come in contact with Judah at that time scarcely more than Parthia or China. So far as is known to us, the Jews had suffered nothing from Babylon. Her fortunes therefore stood in no special connection with either the national or the moral and religious life of the Jews. This is a very peculiar case, since almost all the prophecies bear a somewhat close relation to the religious life of those to whom they were first addressed.

(2.) Yet again, these predictions of the fall of Babylon make a strong case of a prophecy which to human view is built upon nothing. Within the range of human foresight, however sagacious, nothing had appeared in the present—nothing was looming up within the visible future—upon which to build such a presage of unborn history as this. For Babylon was then entirely overshadowed by the great empire of Assyria. Who could see that Assyria was to go down, and this small city—then a province of Assyria and a third or fourth rate power—to come up, to be queen of the nations? Besides, the prophet names the Medes as the conquering power, destined to subvert and supplant proud Babylon. But the Medes at this date were an unborn power. A rude people living on the southern and western shores of the Caspian Sea, who had made no mark yet in Asiatic history and had thrown out no foreshadowings of their future prowess; what mortal eye could see in them the future conquerors of great Babylon? And yet to heighten the complication of future events and put them still further beyond the possible reach of human sagacity, this Median power rose up somewhat suddenly about one hundred years after the writing of this prophecy, and *with the aid of Babylon* laid siege to Nineveh, captured and destroyed it and thus subverted the great Assyrian empire, B. C. 625. These are the people named in this prophecy as the future conquerors of Babylon! Whose eye could foresee this, save the eye of God?

(3.) In point of style, this prophecy respecting Babylon stands unrivaled. The tone of chap. 13 is sublimely bold and

\*Ahaz died B. C. 728, and the captivity terminated in restoration, B. C., 536. The interval is therefore 192 years.



graphic, yet even this is in some points surpassed by the exquisite poetic drapery of chap. 14.—If we ask why such a subject was given to the pencil of Isaiah, so far in advance of its special adaptation to the interests and wants of the Jews, bearing the reader onward into the unknown future nearly two centuries, one point in the answer may be that the subject found in him a master mind to grasp and paint it. His qualities as a poet-seer adapted him pre-eminently to do justice to such a theme. Another point in the answer may have been that the Lord purposed to confound the philosophy of those who would fain resolve all prophecy into human sagacity. May we not assume that he takes pleasure in setting at nought such wisdom of men, and in sweeping to the winds the sophistries and criticisms by which men labor to subvert the fact of divinely revealed prophecy?—Throughout this chapter the Lord himself may be considered the speaker. He gives command to unfurl the banner and to muster his hosts for the war against Babylon. The sound of their tramping squadrons is heard from far; they are seen coming; his instruments of vengeance—and his presence among them—for destruction to all that Chaldean land. He calls for wailing over a ruin so fearful; depicts the ensuing faintness of heart and pangs of agony. You see the stars fading out; the sun darkened in his going forth; men become few; the vast populations of great Babylon flee, or die; the Medes appear by name as the Lord's executioners, and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, goes down to rise no more. Her very site is doomed to sterility and solitude, save as wild beasts gather there who are wont to make their homes in places most desolate.

1. The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

2. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

The scene which breaks first upon the view is bold, vivid, and inspiring. "Lift high the banner upon a bare mountain," [where no forest trees can hide it], raise the voice for them in trumpet tones; wave the hand and let them enter the gates of the nobles" [of Babylon]. They have a most inspiring mission from the Almighty, of conquest and martial glory. Let them gather at his call and hasten to do his work.

3. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, *even* them that rejoice in my highness.

"Sanctified," must be taken in the original sense of that term,

viz.: Set apart for especial service; here, the service of arms for the subjugation of proud Babylon. I paraphrase the next clause, "I have called my heroes to execute my anger, even my proudly exulting warriors;" the men of lofty spirit who exult to fulfill my mission. When in his overruling providence the Lord has the work of war to be done, he readily finds men full of martial inspiration to do it.

4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the hosts of the battle.

5. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

Listen, and you hear the sound of moving hosts upon the mountains [those Medes came from the mountains of Armenia]; the Lord of Hosts [King of the armies of heaven], is now on earth, mustering his hosts to battle.—"Coming from a land afar" (v. 5.) "from the end of heaven" (probably, from the extreme horizon of vision, far as one can see), the Lord Jehovah, and the hosts whom he is to use as the weapons of his indignation, to lay waste all the land of Babylonia. God in the midst of his army, and they seen especially as his instruments to execute his fierce displeasure, combine to make this view exceedingly grand and impressive.

6. Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

"The day of the Lord" is his time for any signal achievement. It is here said to be *at hand*, not in point of absolute time which was not far from two centuries to the first fatal blow, and much longer still before Babylon became utterly desolate; but it was near, either as seen by the prophet and with reference to the impressions made on his mind; or with relation to the events immediately preceding and sketched just above. It would be but a short time after the mustering of those Median hosts before the proud city would fall.—It will come as a mighty ruin from the Almighty one; where the Hebrew signifies that none other than a resistless overthrow should be expected from an omnipotent arm. The words rendered "destruction" and "Almighty" are from the same root.

7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

8. And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman

that travaileth : they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as flames*.

With the Hebrews, these are common symbols of panic, powerlessness and pain.—The last two clauses of v. 8, mean, They shall look into each other's faces with amazement and horror; their faces shall have the aspect of flames—livid, or more probably flushed with unwonted excitement.

9. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

The word "cruel" is not the most happy choice for this place since it carries with it the idea of unjust severity. The Hebrew word used here need not go beyond the idea of resistless energy.—The last clause indicates *why* these judgments are sent. The "sinners thereof" have sinned past longer endurance. Justice demands that they be destroyed out of that land.

10. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

This is truly a fearful and appalling day, "for" even the great lights of the heavens are eclipsed and seem to have gone out in darkness! This figure is quite common in the Hebrew prophets, appearing however under various degrees from the shading of the earth as in a cloudy and dark day, to the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood. The phenomena of the eclipse, always terrific to the ancients, appear to lie at the basis of this figure. See Isaiah 24: 23, and 34: 4, and Ezek. 32: 7, 8; Joel 2: 10, and 3: 15; Amos 8: 9.—The word rendered "constellations" refers to the more brilliant, the *Orions*, this being the plural of the word rendered Orion in Job 9: 9, and 38: 31, and Amos 5: 8.

11. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

"Punish the *world* for their iniquity" conceives of the great Chaldean empire as embracing most of the world then known to the Jews. Thus ancient authors called the Roman empire "the whole world."—The last word is better rendered "the tyrants," with reference to their oppression of subject tribes and nations. This verse drops the figurative and returns to plain, literal language. The day of retribution on proud Babylon has come.

12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

“More precious,” in the sense of more *scarce* and *rare*. The waste of human life occasioned by war with its triple scourge—the sword, pestilence and famine—will leave but few men where but lately were so many. Some understand the passage as referring to the great price demanded by the conquerors of Babylon for the ransom of captives. The former sense is more in harmony with the strain of the context.—The learned still debate the question whether ancient Ophir was in India or Arabia. Either way, the sense of our passage is the same.

13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

A strong poetic view of these social and political convulsions sees even the framework of nature herself convulsed. The Almighty shakes the heavens; the solid earth is jostled from her place; all nature being in throes of agony and terror under the wrath of the Lord. What a view is this of the power of Jehovah and of the terribleness of his judgments on the wicked!

14. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

The English translation and punctuation of this verse assumes that “*it*,” the *earth*, is like a chased roe and like sheep with none to gather and fold them. A better sense compares the fleeing people, spoken of in the latter part of the verse, to the roe and the sheep; thus “And it shall come to pass that as a roe frightened and as sheep, with no shepherd or home, so they (the people of Babylon) turn every one to his own people and flee each to his own land.”—Every great commercial city will embrace a heterogeneous people aggregated from every land of commerce. It is so in the London and New York of this age and of every other age. Hence, when such a city is panic-smitten with the knell of doom, its foreign population are the first to flee, and naturally, as here said, each to his own people and land.

15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by the sword.

The nicer shades of thought in this verse will be modified by the question of its reference either to the mixed foreign population, spoken of in the verse previous, or to the Babylonians generally who are present in the next verse following. In the

former case, all the foreigners found are thrust through, and whoever of them still adhere to the fortunes of Babylon shall fall by the sword. In the latter case, the last clause would more naturally mean, every one that is caught, "scraped up" (Hebrew) in the careful search for men, must die.

16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

Such were the barbarities of ancient war, perhaps more savage among those nations who came down from the northern and less civilized regions. The cruelty of murdering the children is heightened by the heartlessness or perhaps the savage delight of doing it before the very eyes of agonized fathers and mothers.

17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver and *as for* gold, they shall not delight in it.

See some historic notices of the Medes in the introduction to this chapter. The Medes only are named (without the Persians) as in Jer. 51: 11, 28, for the reason that they rose to prominence first in time, and really led in the conquest of Babylon.—As bearing on the divine inspiration of this prophecy, it should be distinctly noted that when Isaiah wrote it, the Medes were yet a dependent province of the great Assyrian empire, and had never been known as a powerful, independent kingdom. Who could foresee that they ever would be? "They revolted (says Dr. Alexander) at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Judah and Israel. Their first king, Dejoces, was elected about B. C. 700 (*i. e.*, within one year of the death of Hezekiah). His son, Phraortes, conquered Persia. Then the united Medes and Persians, with the aid of the Babylonians, subdued Assyria under the conduct of Cyaxares I., (B. C. 625). The conquest of Babylon was effected in the reign of Cyaxares II., by the Median army, with an auxiliary force of 30,000 Persians under the command of Cyrus, the king's nephew, B. C. 538."—Unlike the more southern nations of Asia, the Arab plundering tribes; and indeed unlike most nations that have ever waged war, the Medes, and especially the Persians, thought less of gold than of conquest and glory. Zenophon puts in the mouth of Cyrus, addressing the Medes, sentiments of the same character. "Ye men of Media, and all ye now present; I know you well, and that ye have not come forth with me in this war as men who want money and goods." How should the eye of a merely human sagacity have foreseen this special feature of a conquering power as yet unborn and of course, with no national character yet developed?

18. *Their* bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

Alexander remarks justly that the word rendered "young men" might better have been rendered children or boys, in harmony with the strain of the verse. The Persians especially were famed for the use of powerful bows, the arrows from which literally dashed boys in pieces; or as the sense may be, they may have used those heavy bows for clubs. The scene painted here is one of savage ferocity.

19. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Great Babylon, one of the most magnificent of cities, was not only the glory of that one kingdom, original Babylonia, but properly of many kingdoms, united under one scepter during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. In the terse phrase of the original, "It shall be as God's overthrowing of Sodom and Gomorrah," i. e., made an utter ruin, as God made those cities. The ruin of Babylon was ultimately no less complete, though her fall was a thing of time, while theirs was sudden. Obviously the prophet saw the ruin of Babylon far in the future, presented in a way that did not closely distinguish between the first blow struck by Cyrus, and the ultimate result in her completed desolation. Yet in fact Babylon fell slowly. Centuries transpired between the first blow and the last. The prophetic showing omitted these elements of *time* in the process of her fall. Perhaps we might say, the purpose of God in revealing this prophecy did not require a minute historic sketch of the details of her fall.—This history is briefly, that Cyrus first conquered Babylon, B. C. 538, but aimed rather to preserve than to destroy the city; that the city rebelled against the Medo-Persian throne twice during the reign of Darius Hystaspis (B. C. 521–485), and once during the reign of Xerxes, his son; but was in each case subdued, its walls cut down and its military strength greatly reduced. Next, the city fell before Alexander the Great (B. C. 330), after which it was reduced successively by Antigonus (about B. C. 306); by his son Demetrius also, and by the Parthians. It suffered much from the growth of the rival cities, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon. Strabo (B. C. 50–1) calls Babylon "a great desert." Pausanias (wrote A. D. 130–150) says that in his day there was nothing left save the walls. In the time of Jerome (A. D. 385–420) these walls served only to inclose a park or hunting ground for the Persian kings. Other testimonies during the middle ages show it to have been utterly desert. Recent travelers confirm this

most fully. The superstitions of the Arab tribes have filled those ruins with hobgoblins and demons, so that, as they love dear life, no one ever lodges there of a night or awaits the coming of darkness amid those ruins.

20. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

Adjoining a vast territory peopled with nomadic races who ordinarily improve for their flocks every shelter that comes ready-made to their hands, this prophecy as to the ruins of Babylon is very extraordinary. Human sagacity would surely have said, "These splendid palaces, abandoned of their occupants, would make the finest of stables and inclosures for folding sheep. Most certainly "the Arabians will pitch their tents there from generation to generation." But God foresaw otherwise, and otherwise it proved to be.

21. But wild beasts of the deserts shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

"Wild beasts of the desert," viz., jackals, ostriches, make their lairs among those ruins. The word rendered, "doleful creatures," is properly *howlers*—animals distinguished only for their hideous howls and yells. The word rendered "owls" is "daughters of the ostrich."—The last Hebrew word in this category, rendered "satyrs," raises the somewhat interesting question whether it does really mean demons, devils; and if so, whether it intends to affirm their presence as a fact, or only refers to a prevalent and perpetual superstition. The case stands briefly thus. Etymology gives the word the sense of hairy; shaggy; usage, the sense of he-goat. Twice (viz., Lev. 17: 7 and 2 Chron. 11: 15) it denotes objects of idolatrous worship, probably images of goats, taken from Egyptian idol worship. The connection here with other wild beasts of various kinds strongly favors the sense of he-goats, or some animal of like appearance. —But on the other hand, all the earlier Jewish versions, *e. g.*, the Septuagint, the Targums, the Peshito (Syriac), also the later Rabbins; Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Kimchi, the Talmud, agree in the sense of *demons*. It is thought by some that this sense is favored by Matthew 12: 43. "The unclean spirit walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none;" and yet more by Rev. 18: 2, which describes Babylon as "the abode of demons and the hold of every foul spirit." Prof. Stuart in his essay on "scriptural angelology" defends the sense of *demons* in this pas-

sage (Apoc. vol. 2:403). Yet it is at least supposable that John may have had no reference to Isaiah; or if so, he may have followed the Septuagint version without really endorsing its interpretation of this Hebrew text.—On the whole the considerations *pro* and *con* are rather nicely balanced. Beyond question the Scriptures recognize the existence and agency in this world of demons, evil spirits; but it is at least very questionable whether this passage affirms that the ruins of old Babylon ever formed one of their special haunts. What had they to do there?—The English word “satyr” seems to hold middle ground between the two theories above discussed, it being used in heathen mythology for a fabulous thing, a sylvan deity or demigod, usually represented as part man and part goat. Jerome seems to be the father of this view. He found in this Hebrew word an allusion to the Pans, Fauns and Satyrs of classic mythology. This view is of course to be exploded.—There is abundant proof that the superstitions of the Arab tribes locate demons and all other like horrid and terrible things among the ruins of Babylon. Whether these superstitions are in any wise dependent upon the Jewish interpretation of this prophecy may well be questioned.—This interpretation came legitimately to the Jews, an outgrowth of the hatred and horror which the nation have borne toward their old oppressor.

22. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in *their* pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The Hebrew words can not well refer to “beasts of the islands.” *Howling beasts*, probably the oriental wolf or the jackal, are meant. These shall howl in the palaces of proud Babylon. Where men reveled in intoxicating pleasures and blasphemed the God of heaven, there for ages only dismal, almost unearthly howls of beasts of prey resound.—That “her time is near to come” has been indicated already, v. 6. See notes on that verse.



## CHAPTER XIV.

In this chapter are three distinct prophecies. The first completes the burden of Babylon (v. 1-23); the second predicts the



overthrow of the Assyrian host (vs. 24-27); and the third announces the fall of Philistia, here called by its ancient name, Palestina (vs. 28-32).

The manner of presenting this prophecy against Babylon is peculiar. The prophet looks forward to a point of time very near the close of the captivity in Babylon; sees deliverance coming through God's revived remembrance and love of his people, and sees heathen nations aiding them to return to their land. The Jews, once more at rest there, look back upon the fall of their old enemy and take up a song of triumph in God. The whole earth joins in this song; they enter into the particulars of his downfall. Hell from beneath, *i. e.*, the people thereof wake up at his coming as if amazed that one long so mighty and terrible on earth should now lie prostrate, weak as themselves. They note the contrast between his past and his present state; they dwell on the satanic pride which had fired his soul with aspirations to fix his seat above the throne of God. They marvel again if this can be the man who once made the earth shake and the very heavens tremble; but now, behold, he dies dishonored; is cast out abhorred and unburied: no sons rise after him to honor; the Lord dooms his name to oblivion, his throne to ruin, and his proud city to the besom of destruction. So great Babylon and her proud king go down to infamy to rise no more.

1. For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

The people who had grown old under their weary bondage in Babylon and whose faint hearts had often cried, "How long, O Lord, how long?" might read this prophecy with refreshing to their faith and hope, even as chap. 13 had said, Babylon must fall, "*for* the Lord will have mercy on Jacob" and will yet evince his choice of Israel as his peculiar people. He will plant them again in their own land, nor them alone but strangers also proselyted to the faith of Israel's God, will join themselves closely and cleave firmly to the house of Jacob. This looks to the accession of Gentile converts.

2. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captive, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

It was of the Lord that heathen nations kindly helped the

Jews in their return. He raised up Cyrus for his servant to execute this mission. See chaps. 44: 27, 28, and 45: 1-4. Cyrus gave the Jewish governors authority to draw on the king's treasurers in the vicinity of Judea for the means necessary in rebuilding their temple. See Ezra 6: 8-10, and 7: 21, 22. This was practically using the service of those who had before exacted the service of bondage from them. This verse represents that the relative position of the Jews and of the Chaldeans is reversed, the Jews now the captors and the Chaldeans the captives. The old Chaldean people were brought into practical bondage to the Medo-Persian power, and the latter identify themselves with the fortunes and welfare of the Jews. It would have been entirely in keeping with their policy if they had literally sent off bodies of their Chaldean captives to serve under the Jews.

3. And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve,

4. That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!

The word rendered "sorrow" involves the idea of *hard labor, toil*. "Fear" in this place implies solicitude, trembling anxiety. These terms describe their condition as captives in a foreign land and under a cruel power. Delivered from these evils, they would strike up this illustrative song ["parable"], saying, "How wondrously has that oppressive king ceased to be! that city *the exactress of gold*, which demanded enormous tribute from all the great nations of the earth—how has she fallen!" This etymology and sense of the word rendered "golden" is at least probably correct.

5. The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, *and* the sceptre of the rulers.

This "staff" is of course "the staff of accomplishment," the power of execution. The Lord has broken the right arm of the wicked kings of Babylon. As this means *all* their kings, the plural, "rulers," in the parallel clause is appropriate.

6. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none hindereth.

"He" (in the singular number) is the one ideal king who rep-

resents the dynasty.—The precise construction of this verse is made variously by able critics. The best makes the verse throughout a description of the cruel, resistless tyranny of the Chaldan king, with no reference to his punishment. It changes a single letter in the word rendered "is punished" and makes it a noun. Then the parallelism of the clause is complete, thus; "Smiting nations in wrath, with a smiting which did not pass away; ruling nations in anger with a ruling which none resisted." In his smiting there was no letting up on his part; in his ruling there was no power from without to withstand and hold him in check. The nice fitting of all the parts of the verse under this construction is its strong, not to say ample, justification.

7. The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break forth into singing.

Babylon had subdued all the great powers of Western Asia and Northern Africa, *i. e.*, the whole earth as known to the Jews. When she fell they all breathed freely and felt themselves at rest. Joyful in the thought of no more servitude to a power so oppressive, they break forth in exultant song.

8. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.

Not the nations only but inanimate nature also comes forward to swell the song and enhance the joy.—The word for "fir-trees," according to the best modern authorities, means the cypress. As Solomon brought his choice timbers from Lebanon, so here the poetic conception is that the builders of Babylon do the same thing. Hence this joy of the trees, because since the fall of Babylon's king, no wood-chopper had come up to cut them down.

9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee* at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

The ideal or rather representative monarch of Babylon, goes down at death, as a monarch so guilty should, to the abodes of the wicked. The prophet sees Hell itself moved to meet one so prominent in pride and wickedness. The personified genius of that realm stirs up the spirits of the mighty dead, the giants [in Hebrew, Rephaim] and all the leaders and chieftains of the earth; he rouses up from their thrones all the kings of the nations, to see this newly arrived paragon of oppression and pride.—The word rendered "dead" has the well-established sense of *giants*,

perhaps with allusion to the old giants of the land of Canaan and of the age before the flood, who stood in Hebrew history as mighty in prowess and great in crime, and hence first in the place of retribution. Or possibly the word may refer to the souls of kings and nobles as distinguished from the unhonored mass.

In the consideration of this passage several grave queries arise, *e. g.*, admitting as we must, the highly poetic drapery of this scene, what points does it actually involve and teach as current doctrine among the Jews of that age? What light does it throw upon the views of the best informed religious men of those times in regard to the state of the wicked after death? And yet further, in view of the divine inspiration of Isaiah, what did the Holy Ghost aim to teach mankind in this passage in regard to the future state of the wicked?

In answer to these queries, it seems safe to say—1. That the spirits of the wicked dead yet exist, have a real *life*; and are not annihilated.—2. That they are intelligent and conscious; cognizant of facts around them; fully aware of their own condition, and not, as some have said, in an unconscious sleep.—3. That their state is to some extent at least one of *retribution* for the sins of their earthly life. The spirits of the dead who appear in this scene all assume this of the king of Babylon. He is doomed to dishonor and to various evils, for the sins of his mortal life.—4. That hell is a *place* and has a definite locality, as distinguished from the fanciful idea that it exists only in indefinite space.—These points seem to be most clearly and fully involved in the passage before us. After making all proper allowance for the embellishment of poetry and the boldness of rhetorical figures, these facts still remain, the very ground-work indeed of even its poetry and rhetoric.

But on the negative side, it may be proper to say, though less positively, that this and parallel passages of the Old Testament, were not designed to teach us authoritatively the *locality of this place*. True, the writers speak of going to Sheol as going *down*, going to the lower parts of the earth; and of Sheol as “moved *from beneath*.” But it may well be made a question whether this usage is not fully accounted for by the fact that the earliest views of Sheol as the place of departed spirits very naturally assumed that the soul goes *with the body*, in the same direction, so that, as the body returned inevitably to the dust of the earth and was usually buried under ground, so the soul also went down, perhaps to a lower depth for its destined home.—Again, where else could the ancients locate the spirit-world? At least, we may ask, where so naturally as there?—Briefly then, the reasons for placing this point on the side of negative knowledge; in other words, for assuming that their views of the locality of Sheol, as indicated by their current phraseology, are not to be

held as of divine authority, are these; that those views can be abundantly accounted for without assuming that they came to men through revelation from God; that the locality of Sheol is a point of very small consequence, and therefore one on which we have no special reason to expect definite revelation; and—that any revelation from God on this point might and probably would involve a knowledge of the universe on our part, quite beyond the present range of our minds, and therefore its revelation to us would be impossible without radical changes in the laws of our present existence and relations.—It may be proper to suggest further that the purpose for which the prophet introduces Sheol in this prophecy did not require him to allude to the righteous dead and tell us where they are, or how situated, either absolutely or relatively to the wicked; nor did it require him to speak more definitely than he does of the sufferings of the wicked to the point of defining their nature or duration.—That their doom is one of retribution, involving shame and contempt for the sins of their earthly life, is fully implied here. Beyond this, it reveals nothing; yet this silence on further points can not be construed as disproving any thing which the New Testament has revealed. Isaiah is entirely in harmony with the Psalmist; “The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God (Ps. 9: 17); and with Daniel (12: 2); “Some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.” But we must not assume that on this subject the revelations of the Old Testament are complete in the sense of revealing *all* that is true.

10. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?

The original here gives no indication of a question. It is better therefore to read it as an exclamation of wonder and surprise: “Thou too, though on earth so great and mighty, art become weak as we—likened unto us!” This is thy doom at last.

11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

The poetic conception here seems to be that the decorations and display of this proud king, together with the music of his harps, all come down with him into Sheol, in the sense probably that *despite* of his pride and pleasure, he comes plunging head-long down from the heat of his revelry to his final doom; or perhaps, that these symbols of his pride and greatness had also gone down to *their* grave as he to his, or as we might say, were dead and buried.—Worms under him, worms over him; bed

and bed-covering each of the worms of the earth: such his remorseless doom!—This allusion to worms indicates how close was the original connection of thought between the grave as the place of interment for the body, and Sheol as the abode of departed souls.—The words in which the shades of the mighty dead accost the Chaldean king may be supposed to close here, the verses next succeeding (12–20) being a continuation of the song which commenced with v. 7.

12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

The most approved modern critics assume a tacit comparison of this Chaldean king to the morning star, and of his fall, to the supposed fall of this star from heaven. The morning star might fitly be called "Lucifer" *i. e.*, light-bearer, and also, "Son of the morning," as the herald of its coming. So this king fell from his lofty position in the political heavens where he shone as a star of the first magnitude, or more precisely as one of the most beautiful and prominent of the planets of our solar system. So he had shone, but now how fallen!—The next figure compares him to a fallen tree, once waving proudly, now cut down to rise no more! "*Weaken* the nations," is better in the stronger sense; "didst prostrate" [and triumph over] "the nations."—Some have supposed a reference here to the fall of Satan. Such reference can be at best only doubtful.

13. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

The fall of this proud king was the more fearful by reason of his lofty and even blasphemous pretensions and aspirations. Not satisfied with surpassing everything human and eclipsing all the glory of earth, he had said in his heart, "I will ascend even to heaven itself; I will set my throne above the very stars of God; I will be like the Most High!" The remains of his palace are to-day a huge mass of ruins, sufficing however to show that when in their glory they lacked nothing that human genius and the resources of the conqueror of the world could command.—On the last clause, "I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north;" a question of some little interest arises, *viz.*, whether the terms are Hebrew or Pagan, *i. e.*, whether the allusion is to the Hebrew temple and the recognized dwelling-place of the true God there; or to Pagan mythology and its conceptions of some lofty northern moun-

in as the council-chamber or the festive halls of the gods. Compare Ezek. 28: 2, 14, 16.)—Etymologically, the words "mount" and "congregation," are thoroughly Hebrew, in current and well established use for the temple-mountain and for the assemblies of the people there during the great national feasts. But the last clause, "the sides of the north," is less clearly Jewish.—On either construction it expresses the aspirations of excessive pride and vanity; in the one case to rise above all the gods of heathen worship; in the other, above the God of Israel, the great Maker and Lord of all. The context strongly favors its reference to the one true God.

14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

This language is entirely definite.—The sides of the pit are manifestly in contrast with "the sides of the north;" the point to which he sinks with the point to which he proudly sought to rise. Alexander suggests that the word "sides" here means the *depths*, the lowest parts of the pit.—Ah, what a fall was that, from the loftiest aspirations to the lowest depths of degradation and infamy! Verily "pride goeth before destruction"—just a short space before, only!

16. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?

17. *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners?

All that see him pause to scrutinize him closely, to see if really this is that same mighty conqueror who shook the earth and made its kingdoms tremble. Is this the man who made the wide world a waste, and never opened his prison-doors that his prisoners might go to their homes? They can scarcely believe their own eyes. How can such greatness become so utterly prostrate—such power end so soon in such weakness!

18. All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

19. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, *and* as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet.

20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people: the seed of evil doers shall never be renowned.

To heighten his infamy, the prophet represents him as lying unburied, or if once buried, as being disinterred, exposed, and denied the honors of a decent burial. Through all the ancient world, Jewish or heathen, no infamy or misfortune could exceed that of being denied the honors of interment.—Here the king of Babylon is put in contrast with other kings. They all lie in state, every one in his sepulchre, in the “house” appointed for all the living, and often in magnificent tombs, fitted up with immense labor and cost, and with the utmost display; but Chaldea’s proud and cruel king is thrust out as a thing despised, even as the clothing of slain men all blood-stained and polluted, like a carcass to be trodden under every foot. He goes to this doom of infamy because he has destroyed his own land, and slain his own people; his haughty and cruel administration having proved the ruin not of his people only, but of his country, their “land.”—The direct enumeration of the points and features of his infamy closes off with a general principle or law of the moral universe; *The race of evil-doers shall never be in honor.* The posterity of those who are mighty only to do wrong, who have aspirations only in the line of supreme selfishness, must go down to utter infamy.

21. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities.

22. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD.

As a conspicuous judgment on this Chaldean dynasty for its proud impiety and its barbarous oppression of the nations, including also God’s people, it is here doomed to utter extinction. No sons shall rise in this line to inherit the place and the power which their fathers have so abused. “Preparing slaughter” for these sons implies their being cut off in the fall of the city and never rising again to power. So was the event. From the first blow struck by Cyrus in the conquest of the city, that kingdom in fact never rose again to power; never regained possession of its former territory; never overspread the earth with its dependent subject cities. This special and striking prophecy that no name or remnant, son or nephew of that fated dynasty should ever rise again to power—has been definitely and undeniably fulfilled. No scion of that royal house ever again sat on the



throne of Babylon. The city passed entirely into other hands, and never returned to Chaldean supremacy. Babylon never became again a great capital, the central point of a great eastern empire. The Persians retained their capital within their ancient domain. Shortly before his death, Alexander purposed to make Babylon his capital. His luxury and wine made it his grave, and buried there all his plans for the future greatness of Babylon.

23. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The bittern is thought by the best critics to be the porcupine or hedgehog. God gave proud Babylon into his possession. "I will convert it into pools of water," has been literally fulfilled. Those immense walls, towers, temples and palaces, falling into ruins, soon obstructed the current of the Euphrates, flooded the adjacent alluvial plain, filled it with stagnant marshes, and literally "made it pools of water." Thus the elements of her greatness became the elements of her hopeless desolation. —Finally, the Lord declares, "I will sweep it with the besom [broom] of destruction"—sweeping it clean of all its beauty, its greatness, and its luxury; destroying everything in which she had impiously gloried.—Reverting for a moment to the strain of these predictions of ruin on the proud monarch of Babylon as culminating in his doom in Sheol, it will be seen that the prophet not only alludes to this after life as a terrible retribution for his sins, but he makes this the fundamental idea of the whole scene. No other one thought is so central; none other so pervades the whole description as this; *Retribution for human pride and impiety toward God: Retribution for oppression and wrong toward man*. It must be admitted that such and so much prominence must fairly represent both the doctrine taught by the Spirit of God, and the views held by the good men of that age, in regard to the state of the wicked after death.

24. The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

25. That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden from off their shoulders.

26. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.

27. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

As said above, this passage predicts briefly the destruction of the Assyrian army in the Lord's land. The locality "upon my mountains," corresponds with the prophetic account in chap. 10: 28-34, the mountainous region near Jerusalem. It is introduced here to impress strongly the fact that what the Lord purposes, he surely performs. Let this prediction against Assyria stand as a sample—an illustrative case—of the certain connection between prediction and fulfillment; between the Lord's purpose, and its execution. In the case of the Assyrian hosts, the fatal blow followed close upon the prophetic word. After it fell, the example would stand before the nation as a solemn voucher for the truth of these predicted judgments on Babylon. —Nor is the analogy restricted to the single point of certain fulfillment upon God's enemies. It covered also another point: deliverance to God's people. When that blow fell on Assyria, it struck the yoke from the neck of the Lord's people, and his burden from their back. So should his fatal blow on great Babylon bring speedy deliverance and restoration to his people. —So runs the great purpose which embraces the fortunes of all human kingdoms; so works the hand that is stretched forth to shape the destinies of all nations. Who shall gainsay his announcements? Who shall reverse his purposes? Who shall roll back the course of his predetermined judgments?

28. In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.

29. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit *shall* be a fiery flying serpent.

30. And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.

31. Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, *art* dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none *shall* be alone in his appointed times.

"This burden" is the special prophecy in vs. 28-32; a prediction of calamity on Philistia.—As to the historical allusions in this passage, Palestina is admitted to be the ancient equivalent of Philistia, the country of the Philistines, lying along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, and on the southwest border of Canaan. The Philistines came originally from Egypt; settled in Caphtor (Jer. 47: 4), (Caphtor probably

meaning Crete), and thence took possession of the sea-coast of Canaan.—“The rod that smote thee” is the power of Judah; “broken” when for the sins of Ahaz “the Lord brought Judah low,” for “he had made Judah naked” (i. e., defenseless) before her enemies. During the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines had invaded the cities of the low country; had taken several, and dwelt there. See 2 Chron. 28: 18, 19. But let not Philistia rejoice in these transient successes against Judah. A more formidable power will rise against her in the Assyrian hosts. They will desolate her country, and bring final relief to Judah from the Philistines.—Out of the serpent’s root [progeny] shall spring up a more deadly form of serpent.—“The firstborn of the poor” are either the poorest of the poor—the chief in poverty, or the immediate successors of those who are now so low in military strength. God’s people shall soon be safe as to danger from the Philistines.—“I will kill thy root with famine,” so that, once cut down, thy very root shall die and there be no reviving of thy nationality.—And, not “he,” but “it,” (the famine) “shall slay thy remnant.”—V. 31, calls on the strongly walled cities of the Philistines to wail in the near prospect of their national ruin.—The word for “dissolved” in some cases means melted of heart and become powerless through panic; but probably here has the sense of absolute prostration of power.—From the north rises to view a cloud of dust, betokening the approach of an armed host (the Assyrians), and there is no straggler in his marshaled ranks. The word rendered “appointed times” means rather in their *appointed ranks*, in the military order of their moving hosts. They come in unbroken phalanx, with a martial power that Philistia can by no means resist.

32. What shall *one* then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

Philistia is now fallen, and Zion has no more to fear from this ancient and long formidable foe.—What now shall one answer the messengers who may come from foreign nations to ask after the fortunes of Israel? This, that the Lord Jehovah hath laid the foundations of Zion, and his poorest, feeblest children may trust his care and love to protect her to the end. The Lord will never forsake the Zion which himself has founded!—Let this go forth to be known and remembered in all the earth. It is well that all the heathen should know that the living God will befriend his trustful people. It matters not how poor they may be in the sense of military weakness as seen and judged of by men of the world. It will always be enough for Zion that her own God has laid her foundations and will be her everlasting Refuge.

## CHAPTERS XV AND XVI.

THESE two chapters are in subject one—a prophecy of calamity on Moab. In most points this prophecy bears a very close resemblance to Jer. 48, which treats of the fall of Moab. Ezekiel makes a much more brief allusion to this event (chap. 25: 8–11).—Moab, whose country lies on the east side of the southern half of the Dead Sea, with Edom on its southern border, and Ammon on its northern, was, like Ammon, descended from Lot. Together with Ammon and Edom, he was spared from destruction when God gave to Israel for a possession, his neighbors, Sihon and Og of the Amorites, and the nations of Canaan. At some periods Moab seems to have held toward Israel relations half fraternal; yet sometimes they were hostile, and again tributary. David put them under tribute (2 Sam. 8: 2). They doubtless remained so through the reigns of David and Solomon; and then gave their allegiance to the northern kingdom till the death of Ahab. (2 Kings 3: 4–37.) This prophecy (16: 1) recognizes their obligation to send this tribute to Jerusalem.—Ezekiel plainly intimates (25: 8–11), that the contempt expressed by Moab toward the Most High God worshiped in Judah, coupled probably with their exultant joy (like that of Ammon and Edom) in her fall, were the sins for which these terrible judgments were sent.

1. The burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence:

The English version connects the first and second verses together, making the sudden destruction of the two chief cities of Moab (in v. 1) the reason why (in v. 2) her people thronged their temples and high places to worship and pray before their gods. But Isaiah usually writes short sentences, and avoids re-

motely dependent clauses. It is better therefore to read the first verse either thus: "The burden on Moab is, *that* in the night of Ar-Moab's assault, it is brought into the silence of death;" or thus: "Surely" (equivalent to, "I say *that*") "in the night" etc. The verse states that in a single night, the two chief cities of Moab are carried by assault and utterly ruined—brought to a dead silence. Ar-Moab was her capital, situated on the south side of the river Arnon. Kir-Moab, a few miles southeast from Ar, was renowned for its military strength. Its ruins are still identified at Kerak. The fall of these two cities sealed the doom of Moab.

2. He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads *shall be* baldness, *and* every beard cut off.

"Bajith" is best taken as a common noun, meaning temple. "He," (the people of Moab collectively) goes up to the temple, even Dibon (one of her prominent cities) goes up to the high places to weep: on Mount Nebo and on Medeba, Moab wails; all heads are bald; every beard shorn.—This Mount Nebo is that from which Moses saw Canaan.—There is moral power in this representation of all Moab as thronging his idol temples and high places of idol worship, for help in his distress, but all in vain.

3. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

All appear in the streets clad in the coarse garments of mourning. On the housetops, and in their places of public resort, they wail aloud and bitterly. The last clause reads literally, "coming down with tears." The English version explains this of *tears running down*. It is better to preserve the antithesis between *going up* [to the high places] with tears, and then after all their praying, *coming down* with grief unabated, still weeping. Their idol gods cannot dry one tear!

4. And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh; their voice shall be heard *even* unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him.

To give more definiteness to the thought, the writer specifies. Heshbon and Elealeh, two of her populous cities, lift up their wailing cry. It is heard even to Jahaz. This general

sorrow touches even their armed hosts with the common sympathy of grief; they lift up the plaint of agony, and not the war-cry of battle: every one's soul is in trouble within him. —The prophet intimates that the army has lost all spirit and courage, and falls into the sweeping current of national grief and panic—another proof that the nation's doom is sealed.—Heshbon was the royal city of the Amorites, the city of Sihon their king (Num. 21: 26). Its site is still identified under the name Heshban. Several of these names of cities appear in the passage Num. 21: 26–30.

5. My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives *shall flee* unto Zoar, a heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

Critics have interpreted the several clauses of this verse quite variously. The English version gives the most vivid sense. I paraphrase it, My heart (says the prophet) cries out in the sympathy of grief for Moab. Her fugitives [flee] even to Zoar (the little city whither Lot fled to escape a similar destruction). They are like a heifer of three years old, roaming wildly and lowing piteously, for they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping and wailing; along the way to Horonaim, they raise the cry, "*Destruction, destruction to Moab! All is lost!*" Probably the prophet gives here the words which he supposes to ring out over all the land like the knell of a nation's doom; "*destruction!*"—We must not fail to note the spirit of tender sympathy which the prophet manifests with the people of Moab in their great national calamity. Doubtless he saw and felt that as toward God and his throne, their doom was just; yet why should he not weep over such calamities falling on his fellow-beings? They were indeed sinning, but they were human.

6. For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate; for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing.

Nimrim appears (probably) under the name of Nimrah and Beth-nimrah in Num. 32: 3, 36, and Josh. 12: 27; in the latter passage, as "in the valley," and hence well watered. But to add to the general calamity, these waters dry up; the grass, (not "hay") withers; herbage fails; no green thing is left remaining. —It is however supposable that these are figures to represent the utter desolations of war and invasion.

7. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.

It is now generally held that "the brook of willows" is a stream (known as "Wady el Ahsy," in Robinson and Smith's Researches) opening into the Dead Sea near its southern extremity, and forming the boundary between Moab and Edom. The sentiment of the verse then is, that since the people could no longer subsist in the land, they gather up all their past accumulations, and bear them away to this border stream and across it into Edom.

8. For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim.

For the cry of ruin has compassed the whole land; war and drouth combined reach every part, so that the wailing and howling of people forced from their desolate homes re-echo to the remotest borders.—Beer-elim is thought to be the identical "well of the heroes" (the sense of the Hebrew words) which appears in Num. 21: 16-18, which the princes by direction of Moses dug with their staves. This was near the borders of Moab. See Num. 21: 16-18.

9. For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

Jerome states that in his day "Dibon" was also called *Dimon*, the change originating in these very scenes to express the sense of the Hebrew "*dam*" which means *blood*. To all the rest, the horrors of carnage are superadded; the waters of Dimon are and are to be "full of blood," for the Lord has yet other and perhaps sorer calamities to bring upon this city.—"Lions" probably represent destructive armies. The literal sense is possible, but in this connection, not probable.



## CHAPTER XVI.

1. SEND ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.

"Send the lamb to the ruler of the land," meets with a ready explanation from the facts stated (2 Sam. 8: 2), "that the Moabites became David's servants and brought gifts;" and yet more definitely (2 Kings 3: 4, 5), that "Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and rendered to the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs, and one hundred thousand rams with the wool. But it came to pass when Ahab was dead that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."——In this time of her distress, Moab needed the protection of Judah, and felt this need. Hence in this verse the people are supposed to suggest to one another, or as the sense may be, the prophet suggests to them, the resumption of this tribute in the hope of re-establishing friendly relations. Come and let us again send lambs to the legitimate ruler of our land, "and to the mount of the daughter of Zion."——"From Selah," etc. "Selah" is the Hebrew word for *rock*, corresponding to Petra in Greek, both being current names for the famed capital of Edom. This city was mainly built in a deep ravine between the rocks, many of its buildings being hewn from the rock itself. It is named here, we may suppose, either as the place to obtain the lambs, it being a great mart of trade; or as the point where the Moabites, fleeing south, were largely convened.

2. For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.

The "daughters of Moab," and their wives and mothers as well, are now seen flying in terror and confusion, till they meet at the fords of the river Arnon, the northern boundary of their country, where they seem to be arrested by the impossibility of crossing over. By a pertinent and beautiful figure, they are like a wandering mother-bird and her nest full of young, tumbled out and left to flutter and scream in terror. The Hebrew is not precisely "the wandering bird *cast out of her nest*," but as above, the wandering bird, her nest being thrown or emptied out; where the nest is obviously put for its *contents*——the nestling young.

3. Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth.

Thus the daughters, or the people of Moab in general, accost the men of Judah, imploring them to do a wise and kind thing—give a helping hand to their neighbors in their present distress, and so make friends for themselves by a generous act. Make thy shadow thrown over us as the night in the heat of noon;



hide my outcasts; betray not my fugitives. Take in my fleeing people and secrete them from their pursuers for a little time till the danger be overpast.

4. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

The English version assumes that Moab is addressed and besought to receive and protect "*mine* outcasts," i. e., those of the suppliant party. But this construction entirely reverses the course of thought in the context. For it is certainly the people of Moab who are in trouble—whose outcasts are fleeing their country for safety—who propose to gain the good will of Judah by renewing their tribute, etc. We are therefore compelled to give a different turn to this phrase. The choice lies grammatically between these two constructions: (1) "Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee;" a suggestion from Maurer who makes the word rendered "outcasts" an old form of plural construct, meaning, not "*my* outcasts," but *outcasts of*: or (2) Let my outcasts, even those of Moab, dwell with thee—where the reason for introducing the name, Moab, might be to say, even *all Moab*, for the whole nation is in the jaws of ruin.—"Cover them from the face of the spoiler;" secrete them till the enemy shall have gone.—"The extortioner" is here in the broad sense of the pillager, the Arab freebooter whose mission is only plunder and slaughter. The argument made in this last clause is that the friendly office sought of the Jews will be transient, for a few days only; for these ravaging, plundering bands soon finish their work and are off. This is the law of their movements—sudden blows, soon over. They dare not remain long lest the robbed party should muster friends and forces enough for effective retaliation.

5. And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Here are yet further pleas for protection from the Jews. Mercy strengthens the throne; kind and fraternal offices bind nations together: and as to your throne especially, it is your glory that one sits upon it ruling faithfully in the tents of David, administering the government in justice and righteousness. It is not clear to which of the human kings of David's line if to any one specially, this compliment refers; more probably to the Messiah than to any other, for his name had already

become associated with ruling in supreme justice and righteousness. This is doubtless intended as a compliment, embodying an argument and plea for the protection sought.

6. We have heard of the pride of Moab; *he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so.*

The Jews reply, keenly rebuking the pride of Moab, and virtually refusing them the protection sought. "We have heard of the pride of Moab, very proud."—The last clause means, We know the unsoundness of his vain boasts, the falsehood of his pretensions.—The Hebrew word rendered "*so*" is here a noun with a negative to reverse its meaning; equivalent to the *no-soundness* of his lies.

7. Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn; surely *they are* stricken.

"Therefore," because all hope of succor from foreign power fails, Moab shall wail for Moab, deploring her own desolations.—In the next clause critics differ as to the sense of the word rendered "foundations." Some read, "At (or over) the *ruins* of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn, altogether smitten." Others, "for the grapes (or raisin-cakes) of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn, etc." The word occurs but rarely, and the question at issue is one of no great importance. Vines are spoken of in the next verse, may be in this. So also it is entirely pertinent to speak of their wailing over the ruins of a desolate city.—In the very last clause, the word "stricken" qualifies "ye;" "ye mourn, only" (*i. e.*, wholly) "smitten."

8. For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vines of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.

The fields of Heshbon and the vines of Sibmah were much celebrated, being doubtless of the first class; but their enemies had broken them down. These vines had spread far out abroad, luxuriant, magnificent; but they are destroyed!

9. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.

Therefore with a weeping like that of Jazer will I bewail the vine of Sibmah, for the war-shout has fallen [suddenly] upon thy summer fruits and harvests. The word rendered "shouting" means a loud outcry, and in use is applied both to the war-cry of battle and to the joyous songs and shouts of those who tread grapes or gather in harvests. Jeremiah uses it in the former sense, chap. 51: 14; in the latter in chaps. 25: 30, and 48: 33. The prophet plays upon these two senses, so opposite in their ultimate significance, meaning that the war-shout falls suddenly where you might expect the harvest-shout, and even perhaps breaking it off and superseding it, so that what began with joy over harvest-gathering ends with the horrors of the war-cry.—Here the prophet's sympathy appears again in his tears over fallen cities.—The allusion to "the weeping of Jazer" has lost its historic significance. Who can recall it?

10. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses; I have made *their vintage* shouting to cease.

All the joy of harvests shall cease.—In the clause, "The treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses," the original does not mean that the usual treading brings out no wine, but that there shall be no treading, the public calamity precluding such labor. Vintage-shouting is superseded by the war-shout.

11. Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.

Here, as often, the bowels (the viscera in general) are spoken of as the seat of the emotions of grief. My bowels moan like the plaintive tones of a harp.—Kir-haresh is only another form for Kir-hareseth, as in v. 7.

12. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail.

The ultimate meaning of this verse is that all the prayers of Moab to his idol gods have only wearied him in vain and avail him nothing. The only critical difficulty lies in fixing the point of transition from stating the circumstances, to making the main affirmation. Thus, it may be read: "It shall be when Moab has presented himself [is seen], and has wearied himself on his high places, and has gone to his sanctuary to pray; that then, after all, he shall not prevail." Or thus: "It shall be that after

presenting himself and wearying himself on his high place then he shall go into the very sanctuary of his gods to pray and shall not prevail." The general sense is unquestionable and pertinent here to show the supreme folly of ever trusting such gods as Chemosh and Malcom of Moab. The prediction of Moab's fall would be shorn of its chief moral power without this view of the utter vanity of his gods, and of the confusion of shame and disappointment that must overwhelm such idol worshipers. Remarkably the prophet leaves Moab where he began with him, supplicating his idol gods with tears for help but to no purpose.

13. This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time.

14. But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude and the remnant *shall be* very small *and* feeble.

So much the Lord hath spoken of Moab *before—of old—*for this is the precise significance of the word rendered, "since that time." But now the Lord adds a definite limitation of time within which the prophecy shall be at least in part fulfilled. Within three years, precisely defined like the years of one hire to service, the Lord will greatly humble Moab, abasing his pride and reducing his dense population to a very small number.—The lack of precise historic data precludes us from verifying this prediction. No doubt it was altogether clear to the first readers of Isaiah. They would know the data of this prophecy and consequently when this three years commenced. We do not. Moreover it is plain that the invasion here referred to was only the beginning of the desolations of Moab. They were not ended even in the times of Jeremiah, a century later.



## CHAPTER XVII.

THIS chapter begins with Damascus, the capital of Syria. But vs. 3–11 refer mostly if not exclusively to Ephraim, the kingdom of the ten tribes. The political alliance between these kingdoms at this time will account for this quiet transition from the former to the latter.—Vs. 12–14 are closely connected in thought with chap. 18. They seem to allude primarily to the destruction of the Assyrian hosts, predicted above chap. 10.

24-34, and historically narrated below, chaps. 36 and 37. Yet this special case is referred to here, not so much to give its historic details as to bring out its great underlying truth; *The enemies of God and of his people must fall before his arm.*

1. The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from *being* a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

This caption does not cover the whole chapter. It only indicates the first subject. Damascus ceases to be a *royal city* the capital of an empire, though it was afterward rebuilt and still stands.—“A *ruinous heap*” does not mean one that is *destructive*, but rather *destroyed*; a heap of ruins.

2. The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

Aroer was one of the favorite names for a city, there being at least three of that name within ancient Israel; viz., one within the tribe of Judah (1 Sam. 30: 28); one on the banks of the Arnon, east of the Jordan (Josh. 12: 2, and 13: 16); and yet another within the tribe of Gad, near Rabbah (Josh. 13: 25, and Num. 32: 34). The latter, lying nearest to Syria, and perhaps at this time under its control, is most probably intended here. “Its cities” were the adjacent dependencies, like the “cities of Heshbon” (Josh. 13: 17.) The prophet predicts that these cities shall be abandoned of their people, probably by removal into captivity, and their ruins and forsaken mansions be appropriated by shepherds for their flocks. There should be no man to claim these forsaken houses; none to molest the flocks folded there.

3. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

Fortified cities should cease from Ephraim and royalty from Damascus and Syria. The glory of Syria and Damascus, their greatness and prestige as a kingdom, shall disappear, even as in the case of Israel when the Assyrian cast her utterly down.

4. And in that day it shall come to pass, *that* the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

The fall of Syria having been compared to the fall of Israel, the latter is now stated more definitely that the reader may have a better view first of the ruin of Israel and then of Syria which would be similar.—The fading of the nation's glory, the waning of her strength, is compared to that of a sick man, becoming frightfully emaciated.

5. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arms; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

6. Yet gleanings grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

The fall of the kingdom of Israel before the Assyrian arms would leave only a few scattering inhabitants, even as a few ears are left when the grain harvest is gathered, or a few clusters of the grape or the olive, far out in the extreme boughs.—The valley of Rephaim lay southwest from Jerusalem toward Bethlehem, and is specified here as being near and within sight from the city walls. As if the prophet would say, As you of the city have often seen in the valley of Rephaim.

7. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

8. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

In that day a few will look away from their idols and images unto God their Maker, turning to Him in repentance.—To "have respect to" is here to look toward and unto one, as the source of help and the object of love and worship.—The "groves and images" were groves in honor of Ashtoreth, and little images of the sun, made and worshiped in the name of Baal.—The reformation predicted here took place under Hezekiah (2 Chron, 30: 11), and to a less extent under Josiah (2 Chron. 34: 9). The former passage states that although "the people of Ephraim and Manasseh laughed the king's messengers to scorn and mocked them, yet nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." The latter passage states only that in the general collection for the repairs of the temple, money was gathered of the hands of Manasseh and Ephraim and of all the remnant of

Israel. So when the judgments of God were abroad in the land, a few of the people learned righteousness and were drawn back to the Lord their God.

9. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

Here critics differ on this point, viz.: Whether "the forsaken boughs and uppermost branches," left from before the children of Israel, are an historical allusion to what the Canaanites left behind them when driven from the land by Joshua before the Israelites; or whether they simply continue the same general figure which has been prominent thus far in the chapter—the few grapes or olives left on remote branches in time of harvest. The latter is unexceptionable, and has in its favor, its harmony with the strain of the context. In this construction, we must read, not "left because of the children of Israel;" but "*left from before the children,*" etc., when their enemies withdrew from the country, having pillaged and wasted all they chose. The sentiment is that the Assyrians, having subdued the northern kingdom, left their strong cities and castles in the condition of grape harvests when only a few scattering clusters remain here and there, the mass, a mere desolation.

10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips:

11. In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: *but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.*

Here the sin is that of forgetting God: the consequences are, first, the planting of pleasant plants and the setting of foreign slips, followed by successful, hopeful culture for a short season, but by utter ruin in the time of harvest. The punishment lies indirectly (we may say), in God's suffering the people to set choice plants, getting grape vines from foreign lands; but ultimately and mainly in the utter ruin that will blast all their labors ere the harvest shall be gathered. Probably we must assume a tacit reference to importing from surrounding heathen countries, not their choice plants and grape vines only or mainly, but their faith and practice as to idols and idol worship. The prophet carries out the figures which are so prominent throughout the chapter by speaking of idols and the doctrines of idola-

try as being the choice plants and vines of those countries, introduced into the gardens and vineyards of Israel.—In the last clause the word rendered “heap” is by the best modern critics made a verb, meaning *flies away*, thus; “but away flies the harvest in the day of thy death-wounds and of remediless sorrow.”—So perish all the vain hopes, so end the utmost endeavors of those who forget God and give their strength to schemes of their own for obtaining the good they consciously need.

12. Woe to the multitude of many people, *which* make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, *that* make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters.

13. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but *God* shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

The first word admits of being translated *Woe* or *Ho*, according to the demands of the context. The latter is appropriate here. *Ho*; look, see that rushing throng of assembled nations, the vast Assyrian hosts, their sound like the deep roar of the ocean; their rushing like the mighty waters;—so they come on as if they would sweep our beloved Zion utterly away. But God from on high shall rebuke them. One word from his lips scatters them like the chaff on the hills of Judea before the wind, and like a rolling thing (the light thistle down), before the whirlwind! Ah, how they are borne away to their resistless doom!

14. And behold at evening tide trouble; *and* before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

“Behold at evening tide, trouble;” our hearts were fearful. There lay our foe in sight, his squadrons spreading out far over the hills, and we knew that the might of our arm was nothing against his; but before the morning, nothing of him; “he *was not*.”—Here let us learn God’s lesson; “This is and always must be the portion of them that spoil us—the lot of them that rob us.” Those who set themselves to waste and spoil the Lord’s Zion are awaiting such rebukes from his voice of thunder and from the bolts that leap from his hand. Let them think of it—to their terror! Why should they madly rush on ruin?



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THIS chapter will be very obscure if read only as it stands in the English version and with little or no aid from collateral history. Hebrew criticism has done much for it in the way of throwing light on its descriptive terms. The history of those times contributes yet further light, so that a careful and thorough use of all these aids makes the general sense in the main satisfactory and exceedingly rich.—The people specially described here are the Ethiopians, coupled doubtless somewhat with the Egyptians in as much as they stood politically in the closest relations of alliance and a common sympathy and interest.—Let it be borne in mind that a deep and rankling antipathy had for ages pervaded the two great rival kingdoms that sat respectively on the Nile and on the Euphrates. These valleys were the natural centers of wealth, population and political power, the one for Northern Africa; the other for Western Asia. Hence from the very founding of these kingdoms, Egypt and Assyria, far back at least as the age of Joseph and Moses, savage and bitter wars were waged between these great powers. Ethiopia was naturally associated with Egypt. That they were in close alliance at this time is certified not only by profane history but by historic notices in the Scriptures. Thus the passages (2 Kings 19: 9, and Isaiah 37: 9) show that Tirhakeh, king of Ethiopia, was then coming out to fight against the king of Assyria. Rabshakeh taunted Hezekiah with his trust in Egypt for help against Assyria (Isaiah 36: 6, 9). Shishak (2 Chron. 12: 3) had Ethiopians in his army; Zerah, his successor, is called an Ethiopian (2 Chron. 14: 9–15). Egypt and Ethiopia appear in military alliance throughout Isaiah 20, at a time probably very near the date of this prophecy.—Under such existing relations between these great rival powers, Ethiopia would feel the most lively interest in the military strength of Assyria. How deeply then must the whole nation have been thrilled by the news of that

fearful overthrow of the Assyrian army to which the closing verses of chap. 17 refer!—Hence the key note to this chap. 18 is the sending of these tidings to Ethiopia and the moral results. —In that vast slaughter, the mighty God had shown his great power in destroying his enemies, and his greater love for his people in their protection. It now remained to make the utmost capital out of those displays of his glory by means of their moral impression on the wakened sympathies and eager minds of the great African kingdoms.—The prophet represents the Ethiopians as sending messengers to inquire into the facts of this wonderful event. He bids them go back and report the case, rehearsing it to them, so to speak, as seen on its God-ward side; and closes with an intimation that the final result would be the consecration of that powerful people to the living God in his temple at Jerusalem.

1. Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

2. That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!

The first word should be—not “*Woe*” but *Ho*, as in Isaiah 55: 1—“*Ho, every one that thirsteth,*” etc. It calls attention, or hails a person or people as if near. “*Ho, the land!*” There its messengers are, now coming!—“*Shadowing with wings,*” is rather “*of rustling armies*”—the land that sends forth armed hosts in such vast numbers and with such rustling sound. The word rendered “*wings*” is clearly used in some cases of the wings of an army and manifestly so here.—“*Beyond the rivers of Cush,*” *i. e.*, Ethiopia, gives the location of the people definitely, in the regions lying south of Egypt, around and beyond the headwaters of the Nile.—The next point in the description is not strictly general—that *is accustomed* to send ambassadors, etc., but is particular—that has now sent its ambassadors to us “*by the sea*” (*i. e.*, down the Nile), in vessels of bulrushes; the light bulrush boats that ran on the Nile.—The word “*saying*” (in italics) is out of place here. It falsely represents the ambassadors as saying the words that follow; whereas, these must be the words of the prophet himself. The ambassadors have come to him to learn the news respecting the fall of the Assyrians. He now gives them their message to carry home. “*Go,*” says he, “*ye swift messengers*” [traveling so rapidly on those light-running boats], go back to your own people—“*to a nation,*” not

"scattered," but tall, or as the original means precisely, *extended*, *drawn out*, and not "peeled," but *shorn*, or perhaps polished, good-looking; or as some think, *naked*, i. e., coming from the tropical regions of Africa where the people used very little clothing. "Go to a people terrible" (powerful in war) "from their beginning hitherto." This is probably the true sense of this last clause, although some apply the words, not to time, but to space, thus: go to a people terrible in war and to others further beyond.—The description continues; "to a nation not "meted out," but *very strong*. "Cord" is the Hebrew, and is supposed to be used in the sense of *muscle*, or as cords are made for strength, they may be used as a figure for it. Repetition indicates intensity. A nation not "trodden down," but a nation of *down-treading* people; treading-down others; of all-crushing power. Whose land the rivers have, not "*spoiled*," but *intersected*, i. e., whose land is cut in all directions by the head-waters of the Nile. The entire description represents this to be a nation of great power and prowess in arms.

3. All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

In the construction of this verse the choice lies between applying it to the Assyrian hosts preparing for their assault upon God's people, or to God's hosts preparing to annihilate them. The general sense is not materially affected by this choice, since in either case, the attention of the wide world is called to witness the same grand scene. But inasmuch as God's agency in this event is specially described in vs. 4-6, I incline to refer this v. 3 specially to the Assyrian. On this construction the Lord proclaims; let all the world look and see this proud Assyrian lifting up his banner on the mountains over against my holy city and blowing his trumpet to summon his squadrons to the final charge.

4. For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, *and* like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

5. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruninghooks, and take away *and* cut down the branches.

6. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

Quietly, calmly, as one fully conscious of ample power to annihilate his foe at any moment he may please, the Lord looks on while the proud Assyrian is maturing his arrangements and getting ready for his anticipated conquest.—This portraiture of the calm self-possession of the Almighty Ruler of all, and of the infinite ease with which he cuts down his foes just before they have reached their harvest hour, is admirable and most expressive. The figure gives us the Assyrian hosts and their plans of conquest, as a *grape-harvest*—the fruit-bearing spurs putting forth, the fruit setting and advancing toward maturity; but before the harvest, and while yet the germs are being developed and before the flower has become the ripening sour-grape cluster [Heb.], he cuts off all the fruit-bearing tendrils and takes away all the branches, and they are thrown down for the wild birds of the mountains and beasts of the field, who summer and winter upon them. The figure is kept up to the end. The birds and the beasts make their beds on these branches for summer and for winter. Yet there seems to be a tacit allusion to the myriad carcasses of the fallen hosts left unburied for ravenous birds and beasts to prey and subsist upon throughout the year. This point in the description of a slaughtered army is so common in the Hebrew prophets that we naturally look for it here.—Beyond a question the general sentiment of these verses is that God remains quietly in his own dwelling-place, taking his rest, calmly awaiting the movements of the grand Assyrian army, and looking down as if quite satisfied to let them go on, ripening and maturing their plans till his own time should have come to lift his awful arm for their destruction.—The comparison in v. 4, "Like a clear heat upon herbs," etc., seems tacitly to imply that the Lord was even willing that his permissive agencies should for the time favor the progress of the Assyrian's plans, even as the warm sun and the dew-clouds push forward the ripening of the grapes. But none the less sure are the shafts of death when they strike.

7. In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

The original leaves it somewhat doubtful whether the prophet meant to represent this present made to the Lord as being the Ethiopian people themselves, or something sent by them. Both forms of expression are used, thus: first, A present shall be brought to the Lord, viz., a people [Heb.], but in the English

version, "*of a people tall and shorn; and also secondly from a people terrible,*" etc. The first form of statement represents *the people themselves* as being the offering made to the Lord; the second implies that the offering comes *from* this people. Obviously one and the same people are contemplated. The points of the description all belong to the same people; in the former case, "tall and shorn;" in the latter, "terrible in war from their very existence as a nation to this time." See v. 2. But the ultimate sense is the same in either case, and can be nothing less or other than the consecration of this people to the service and honor of the Lord of hosts who dwelt on Mount Zion—the same mighty God who overwhelmed the proud Assyrian when he defied the King of Zion. The Lord will make this miracle of power and of love for his people effective yet to reclaim and save the nations. He thinks of the Ethiopians as prospectively his own. An offering shall yet come from those far distant lands, high up around the head-waters of the Nile, to his own holy temple on Mount Zion. Nor is this a solitary case. It is rather an *illustrative* case, developing a great principle or law of his moral reign on earth, viz., that every manifestation of himself, and especially those that are great and signal, shall surely yield their glorious fruits in the moral conquest of the world to Jesus Immanuel.—This particular case has already thrown forward some foreshadowings of its future fulfillment, in the scenes briefly sketched, Acts 8: 26–39, where the prime minister of a celebrated queen of Ethiopia found Christ by the aid of Philip, in the reading of this very book of Isaiah, and went home to his country rejoicing. Also in the further fact that some vestiges of Christianity—traces of its earlier power and perhaps prophecies of its later—have lived in that remote and almost unknown land unto this day. Assuredly, Ethiopia shall yet stretch forth her hands unto God." (Psalms 68: 31.)



## CHAPTER XIX.

NATURALLY Egypt comes next in order after Ethiopia, her ancient ally and neighbor. V. 22 gives the key note of the chapter: "The Lord shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing," *i. e.*, smiting *in order to heal* the more effectually. Remarkably as here presented, the divine inflictions upon Egypt are disciplinary rather than merely retributive; not terminating ultimately in destruction but in salvation.—One special reason for bring-

ing before the Jews this prophecy respecting Egypt was to check their tendency to look to Egypt rather than to God alone for help against Assyria. Hence these strong views of her weakness and of her lack of wisdom. Yet another reason may probably have been to show them that their own Jehovah is really the God of all the nations, and has thoughts of ultimate mercy for them all, purposing in his own time to bring them all within the pale of his own spiritual kingdom. If (as shown in this chapter) this be true of the two greatest kingdoms known in the world's history before the time of Isaiah, Egypt and Assyria, it may well be assumed to be true of all the other kingdoms of the earth, and to be fulfilled in its time. This is one of the magnificent inductions from the chapter now in hand.

1. The burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

The majesty of Jehovah, and the terror of Egypt's idol gods and idol worshipers, are put in strong contrast. God comes on a swiftly moving cloud: the idols quail before him and would fain slink away into utter darkness.

2. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

In the strong terms of the original; "I will arouse Egypt against Egypt," one province against another, filling the whole realm with civil war. At several periods, Upper and Lower Egypt had been distinct sovereignties. Apparently they were so during the first sixteen or seventeen dynasties. This would naturally lay the foundations for feuds and anarchy, as here predicted.

3. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.

The "*spirit* of Egypt" is not here so much its courage or resolution, as its *good judgment*, analogous to "counsel" in the parallel clause.—The Hebrew verb for "shall fail" means, shall be poured, emptied out, till nothing is left.—It is a strong proof of this utter lack of good sense that they go for wisdom and counsel to their idols, necromancers, ventriloquists,

wizards; *i. e.*, pretenders to supernatural wisdom obtained through intercourse with the spirits of the dead, analogous to the modern *spiritism*. See chap. 8: 19, 20, and notes there.

4. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

"Give over" has in Hebrew the strong sense, *shut up into*, etc., *i. e.*, consign to a most rigid dominion. "Fierce" is rather *powerful, strong*. The sway of several foreign kings over Egypt at different times fully meets the conditions of this prophecy, *e. g.*, Sargon, Nebuchadnezzar, Cambyses. Not improbably the prophecy is thus general in order to include them all, taking in a wide range of her future history.

5. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.

6. And they shall turn the rivers far away; *and* the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither.

7. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no *more*.

The life of Egypt is the river Nile. No rain or only the least possible falling there, the entire subsistence of the nation hangs on the waters of her one river. Hence naturally this becomes a prominent point in any general description of calamities on Egypt.—"Waters shall fail from the *sea*." To this day, the Egyptians use this word, "the sea," as one of the names for the Nile. See Dr. Robinson's Palestine, I., 542. He says, "El Bahr," the sea, is now its most common appellation. So in Nahum 3: 9, the prophet says of Thebes, "Whose rampart was the *sea*, and her walls from the *sea*."—V. 6 should read: "The rivers become foul" (*i. e.*, offensive to the smell); "the streams of Egypt move sluggishly and are dried away."—V. 7, better thus: "The land naked of trees along the rivers and about the mouths of the rivers, and all the sowed grounds on the rivers, are dried up, driven away, and are no more."

8. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.

The fishermen are thrown out of business and are in mourning. Cast "angle," *i. e.*, the hook, for fish. The Egyptians made great use of fish, the more because their veneration for the cow

forbade their use of her flesh for food. At this day, the net is not used by the Egyptians. But (verifying the accuracy of this prophecy) the fish-net appears on the old monuments. It *was* used therefore in ancient times.

9. Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded.

Even the manufacturers of flax are in trouble, the supply of the raw material being cut off. In the Hebrew "*fine flax*" means "*hatchelled*." The word for "net-works" is *white linen*, byssus.

10. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices *and* ponds for fish.

The English version entirely fails to translate the original, which means, "The pillars of the state (literally, the 'foundation men') are broken to pieces, and all who work for wages are sad of heart." These are the extremes of society, and include the entire population. The *crushing* in pieces of the great men corresponds to the figure which conceives of them as foundation stones.—It is not easy to see how the English translators could have so entirely missed the sense of the original.

11. Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I *am* the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?

The counsellors in ancient Egypt were a caste, an aristocratic class, out of whom both priests and kings were often taken. Hence their claim to respect as counsellors rested somewhat on their pedigree. The prophet says, How can *you*, so void of wisdom, have the effrontery to offer your services to the king?

12. Where are they? where *are* thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.

*Where* are they? Where are thy wise men?—the repetition giving force to the question. The prophet assumes that not one wise man can be found. If any can be, let them tell thee the Lord's purposes as to Egypt; or, if this be too much, let them at least *know*; let them learn and get the knowledge, and not remain in utter ignorance of matters so vital.



13. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, *even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.*

The last clause, "*stay of the tribes,*" is precisely the *cornerstone* of her tribes; meaning the wise and leading men in the several provinces. They have misled Egypt to her ruin.

14. The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken *man* staggereth in his vomit.

The choice of words here was designed to suggest an analogy between the moral infatuation which God sometimes sends on men for their sins, and the state of alcoholic intoxication. The Lord hath *mingled* (as men prepare strong drink, etc.), and they have made Egypt *reel* in all they do, etc. As a judgment upon them for their pride, the Lord left them to their own folly to curse themselves and the nation.

15. Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.

At their wits' end, nonplused in every endeavor, there remained nothing which the highest or the lowest in society could do to purpose. Here also the extremes include all the means, the whole people.

16. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the land of the LORD of hosts which he shaketh over it.

All courage gone, all hearts are trembling before the uplifted hand of the Lord, prepared to smite the nation.

17. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

The judgments of God on Judah are a terror to Egypt. Whoever thinks or speaks of them is alarmed, the impression being, If God scourges his own people so for their sins, what will he do *to us*.—But here the prophet's tone changes, as if to indicate that the Egyptians did truly learn righteousness from God's ways of judgment on Israel. From this point onward, the things predicted are blessings.

18. In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt

speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction.

On this passage critics have differed in opinion widely. The one view which alone seems to rest, not on speculations foreign from the text, but on the things actually said in the text, is that of Calvin, viz., that out of six cities of Egypt, five shall learn of the true God and consecrate themselves to him; but one shall be destroyed. This is assumed to indicate in general the proportion between those who are converted to God, and those who perish in their sins.—“Speaking the language of Canaan” means not necessarily that they learn and speak the Hebrew tongue, but that they use the language of Christian experience; of course in sincerity, to express the thoughts, purposes and affections of the Christian heart. At the same time there may be a tacit allusion to the fact that the earliest fulfillment of this prophecy came through the emigration of Jews into Egypt, bringing their own language, literally that of Canaan, and their sacred writings, God’s own inspired word. In the age of the Ptolemies, the Jews became quite numerous in Egypt. The well known translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, was then made into Greek (as is said) by request of the Egyptian king. The moral condition of the Egyptians was improved by these agencies. Another stage of fulfillment occurred during the first six centuries of the Christian age when large and flourishing churches abounded in Egypt. Yet a richer fulfillment remains to be realized.—“Swearing to the Lord of hosts” can mean nothing less or else than true allegiance.—Interpreters have been misled in their search for the true sense of this passage by assuming that the last city referred to is one of the five, and that the prophet here gives its proper name. Hence an indefinite amount of speculation to decypher this name. They have also labored hard to make out the names of all these cities; of course with no data whatever to build upon.—The phrase, “One shall be called,” is common in Isaiah, yet not in the sense of a *proper name*, but only as descriptive of real character, or of some special event: equivalent here to saying, *but one shall be destroyed*. Compare chaps. 4: 3, and 61: 6, and 66: 4.

19. In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.

20. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of their oppressors, and he

shall send them a savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.

21. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.

The entire strain of this description indicates the conversion of the people to the living God. Naturally, indeed we might say, *necessarily*, the costume is Jewish. The circumstances specified to give the idea of a heathen nation converted to God must be borrowed from the modes and forms of worship and of piety in the Jewish age. Hence the allusion here to an altar to the Lord in the midst of Egypt, and a pillar near it to the Lord; hence sacrifices and oblations, bloody and unbloody; the making of vows and performing them after the manner of pious Israelites. We have no occasion to raise the question whether this altar was intended and used for burnt offerings. The Mosaic law forbade such sacrifices elsewhere than at the one place which the Lord should choose. But really the question is set aside and ruled out when once we rightly understand the figurative use of this allusion.—In v. 20, instead of supposing with our English translators that the altar in v. 19 is “for a sign and a witness,” etc., the better view is that the Lord’s answering their prayer and sending them deliverance is the sign that the Lord is their God, thus: “And this shall be for a sign and witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt, viz., that they cry unto the Lord from before their oppressors, and he will send them a savior, even a great one, who will deliver them.” The Lord had given Israel various signs and witnesses of his being their God, sometimes by miracles; in general by the perpetual agencies of his providence. But this one thing will suffice for Egypt; they will cry to the Lord for help against their oppressors, and the Lord will hear and save.—This promise seems to have had a partial fulfillment in Ptolemy, and again in Alexander the Great, under whom Jewish population and influence greatly increased in Egypt, and with this came also a great improvement of the Egyptian people. But obviously none of these lesser blessings exhausted the wealth of this promise. Very much remains that can never be fulfilled in any other than the great Messiah and his gospel of salvation.

22. And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return *even* to the LORD, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them.

As said above, this gives in epitome the scope and spirit of

this entire prophecy, and of God's whole administration toward the nation of Egypt. His rod upon them has been for discipline and his ultimate purpose, ever sure of accomplishment, is to save in the end.

23. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.

The natural significance of a broad highway, a great international road, between Egypt and Assyria, passing through Israel, must be the most free and easy communication and the spirit of mutual fraternity. These nations are no longer foes as for ages past by, but friends—all one in the fellowship of Christian love. The people of each kingdom may pass freely to the other. The Egyptians will serve [God] with the Assyrians. (So the last clause must mean.)

24. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land :

25. Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Israel shall be the third together with Egypt and Assyria in this goodly fellowship of Christian fraternity. It is Israel especially that is to be a blessing in the midst of the *earth* (not "the land" merely). Israel, long the main repository of the word and ordinances of the true God, will at last become a blessing in all the earth, as the Lord had said long before to Abraham; "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."—These three great nations the Lord will bless, applying to them by distribution those special epithets by which he had so often designated his chosen people; to Egypt, the phrase, "my people," to Assyria, another of like import, "the work of my hands," and to Israel yet another, "mine inheritance." Equally and without preferring one before another all these nations are grouped together as the recognized people of the living God.—So ends this remarkable prophecy. It brings before us definitely the two great rival kingdoms of the ancient world, those two whose mutual antipathies and wars had embroiled the world in bloody conflict generation after generation; between whom Israel had often vacillated and as often sinned under the temptation to seek help in one against the other rather than in her God alone.—Bringing up prominently first the great Egyptian power, the Lord plainly signifies that he will

courage her with the purpose of ultimately saving her, and not her alone, but Assyria and Israel as well.—This broad outlook of prophecy encompasses the world, and stretches forward into times then far remote. The Assyria of that age has long since passed away; but other nations have come upon her ancient soil and elsewhere in populous Asia, *e. g.*, the Armenians and Parthians of the early Christian ages, and others in modern and yet future times, to take her place and stand forward to receive this blessing which the Lord announced in her name.—The Egypt too of that age has gone down very low, and long since ceased to be a great political power among the nations. But Egypt fitly represents Africa. In that continent there are still myriads of human souls sitting in darkness to whom the blessings of the great Messiah must yet come. Looking deeper than the mere costume and drapery of this prophecy, even to its inner spirit, we shall see in it that the old antipathies of belligerent nations who had kept the world in a flame with their wars for more than a thousand years must give place to the freest intercommunication; the most cordial and fraternal fellowship; the hearty and universal service of the living God. This change having come over them they are joyfully recognized by the great God as being all his own beloved and honored people!—Let us bless the name of God for such gleams of light upon the prophetic future of our long-time sin-worn and wasted world!



CHAPTER XX.

ISAIAH, by a divine direction, makes himself personally a sign to the people by laying off his usual sackcloth and sandals, and "walking naked and barefoot," to indicate how the Egyptians and Ethiopians were to be borne away as captives before the king of Assyria.—Cases of such symbolic acts are frequent in Ezekiel. This stands alone in Isaiah.—This chapter introduces to our acquaintance a new king of Assyria, not mentioned by name elsewhere in the Scriptures; Sargon. His case affords a pleasing illustration of the progress made in the knowledge of ancient history within the present generation, especially by means of inscriptions and records brought to light among the ruins of those ancient cities of the old Assyrian and Egyptian empires. Prior to these discoveries, so little was known of Sargon that

critics and historians of the eighteenth century differed widely as to his identity, many of them not accepting the name as indicating a new king in the Assyrian line. Thus Vitringa, Eichhorn and Hupfeld identified him with Shalmaneser; Grotius, Lowth and Keil, with Sennacherib; Perizonius, Kalinsky and Michaelis with Esar—Haddon. All these conjectures are shown to be wrong by the Assyrian inscriptions which prove Sargon to have been distinct and different from the several monarchs named, and fix his place in the list where it had been already assigned by Rosenmueller, Gesenius, Ewald and Winer; between Shalmaneser and Sennacherib. He was certainly the father of Sennacherib, and without any reasonable doubt his immediate predecessor on the throne. It appears from his annals that he began to reign at Nineveh in the same year that Merodach Baladan began to reign over Babylon, which according to the canon of Ptolemy was B. C. 721. This was within one year of the fall of Samaria and the kingdom of the ten tribes.—He is thought to have been an usurper, since he carefully avoids all mention of his father. In order to usurp the throne he may have taken advantage of the long absence of Shalmaneser during his siege of Samaria which lasted three years. It is certain that he claimed the glory of having made that conquest. He specially claimed to have removed the Samaritan captives as colonists into his country, to the number of 27,280 families. He is supposed to have reigned nineteen years and to have made his conquest of Ashdod, referred to in this chapter, in his ninth year, B. C. 712. Remarkably, this very conquest of Ashdod is specially recorded in his national annals. See Rawlinson's Evidences, page 118. It can not be certainly determined whether he took his Egyptian and Ethiopian captives *here* in the army that defended this city; or whether, after its capture he advanced into Egypt and took them there. Ashdod would be the military key to Egypt, and, as such, would be defended in the interest of Egypt. He was one of the greatest of Assyrian monarchs. Tartan, his lieutenant-general, served in the same capacity under his son Sennacherib. See 2 Kings 18: 17.—The moral bearing of this prophecy is obvious, viz., to show the Jews how vain were all their hopes of aid from Egypt against Assyria. When they saw Egyptians and Ethiopians led captive in a manner so disgraceful to the prowess of their nation, how could they expect help from that quarter to prevent the Assyrians from coming down upon themselves?

1. In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it;

2. At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son

of Amoz saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

Isaiah received this commission in the same year in which this siege commenced. The duration of the siege is not stated, but it is supposed to have been three years, so that Isaiah's walking naked and barefoot continued to be a sign and wonder until his prediction was fulfilled in the capture of the city by Sargon and in his treatment of his Egyptian and Ethiopian prisoners. —“Walking naked and barefoot.” In Hebrew usage the word “naked” sometimes means absolute nudity, and in some cases, only partial; *i. e.*, it indicated the removal of only the outer garment, leaving the under garment still upon the person. Thus in 2. Sam. 6: 20, Michal reproaches David with uncovering himself shamelessly when he “danced before the ark of the Lord with all his might;” but v. 14 says of this case that he danced “girded with a linen ephod,” a close fitting under garment. In John 21: 7, we read, “Peter girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea; but this fisher's coat, as the Greek name of it shows, was an outer and not an under garment, *i. e.*, he may have had on still another, an under one, when said to be “naked.” Again, the prophets are in some cases said to be “naked” while they are prophesying. See 1 Sam. 19: 24, and Micah 1: 8. But it is scarcely supposable that this was perfect nudity. Yet further, if in our passage “naked” means absolute nudity, then “barefoot” is a superfluous addition. And yet further, it is scarcely supposable that captives were driven from Egypt or Ashdod to Assyria in a state of utter nakedness. They were probably stripped of their outer garments. So was Isaiah also, as a sign of the same thing in their case.

3. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

A “sign and a wonder” is a special indication of what was to befall Egypt and Ethiopia, *viz.*, that their soldiers were to be taken as captives to Assyria in this disgraceful plight. —A question arises here respecting the application of these three years, *viz.*: What do they qualify? Do they say that Isaiah walked so long naked and barefoot, or only that the sign and the wonder

continued so long, awakening curiosity and holding the mind in suspense, before the fulfillment?—The former is not impossible, since the meaning may be only that he appeared in this manner in public on special and various occasions during the space of three years; but the latter involves less difficulty, since it supposes that he appeared so but once, and that this fact continued for three years to excite the wonder of the people and to hold their minds to the inquiry, what does this mean? At length the lapse of three years brought the fulfillment and solved the enigma. The masoretic punctuation is properly regarded as the earliest index of the sense put upon the Hebrew Scriptures by the Jews. This favors the latter of the two constructions above named, thus: "As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot; three years a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia."

5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

6. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

"And *they*," all people who have had expectations of help from the armies of Egypt or Ethiopia. The next verse is more definite; "The inhabitant of *this isle*" shall say: Behold, see what has befallen the armies which formed our expectation and our hope for help against Assyria; how then can *we* hope to be delivered from their power?—"This isle" means this maritime coast, the population living on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. The phrase was chosen, it would seem, in order to suggest, first, the Philistines whose city, Ashdod, was taken; but remotely, all Judah also, for their country lay along this sea coast. The word "isle" frequently has this broad application to any maritime district.



## CHAPTER XXI.

THIS chapter comprises three distinct "bardens," *i. e.*, predictions of calamity on three distinct nations. The first upon "the desert of the sea" (vs. 1-10) is shown (v. 9) to relate to Babylon and to predict its fall before the Medes and Persians. The second (vs. 11, 12) against Dumah. The third (vs. 13-17) against Arabia.



1. The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through ; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.

The clew to the reference of this prophecy being clearly given in v. 9, we must assume that the word "sea" here means the Euphrates, even as it does the Nile in chaps. 19: 5, and 27: 1. See notes on these passages. The word applies to the Euphrates with even greater fitness, since its high floods overspread a much larger region, and present more fully the appearance of a great inland sea. So Abydenus testifies, while Herodotus states that this vast plain was often overflowed, until Semiramis took measures to prevent it.—The word "desert" seems to be used in prophetic anticipation of what that region would become after the fall of Babylon. Then the ruins of the city obstructed the channel of the river and caused a yet more extensive flooding of the country.—Striking at once into the midst of his theme, the prophet gives us a grand view of that storm of ruin which swept proud Babylon. "As whirlwinds in the south for rushing, so they come from the wilderness, from a terrible land." The approach of the enemy is like the coming of whirlwinds from the south, full of destructive power. This refers to the army of the Medes and Persians.

2. A grievous vision is declared unto me; The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media: all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.

A sad and most afflictive vision is shown me. There is treachery, alluding probably to the stratagem by which Cyrus entered Babylon. There is spoiling also, for the city was to some extent subjected to plunder.—"Go up, Elam," for the Lord of Hosts commissions thee to this work of conquest and spoil: "besiege, O Media;" and let the proud city fall. All the sighing which that most oppressive power has caused to the nations she conquered and especially to my people, the Jews, shall now cease.—Elam is another name for Persia being its largest province.—The naming of these very nations that were to conquer Babylon, nearly two centuries before the event, is one of the undeniable attestations of real prophecy.

3. Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

4. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

These scenes of capture and slaughter afflict the prophet and touch his very heart. He enters deeply into the sufferings of the Babylonians, and speaks as if he were not only there with them, but one of them. The last clause of v. 3 means, I was so bowed down that I could not hear; so dismayed that I could not see. These appalling scenes unnerved and almost unmanned him. "My heart wandered," [Eng. "panted"] or as we might say, my brain reeled.—"The night of my pleasure" alludes to the revelry of Belshazzar and his court, of which the prophet speaks as if he were one of the party. "That the court was reveling when Cyrus took the city is stated in general by Herodotus and Xenophon, and in full detail by Daniel, chap. 5: 1-4, 30." (Alexander.)

5. Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, *and* anoint the shield.

More in keeping with the strain of the clauses preceding and following, the second clause may be read thus; "Prepare the table; spread the cloth (or carpet); eat, drink," etc. The original word admits of this construction. Besides, it is too early to suppose any care or thought about a "watch." At this stage Belshazzar and his nobles thought only of revelry. The passage represents *their thought*, not the counsel of the prophet.—The last clause, however, I take to be the prophet's counsel to them, to be up and ready for the battle. "Anointing the shield," is a part of this preparation, put here for the whole.

6. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.

The manner in which the Lord made this revelation to the prophet is peculiar and intensely graphic. Instead of merely telling him that the city is to be taken, or revealing this with the additional fact, *taken by surprise*, he says to Isaiah, "Go, set a watchman," an ideal personage, the thing being done in vision only, as one might do such a thing in a dream; and "let him report what he sees."

7. And he saw a chariot *with* a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, *and* a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed:

Instead of construing this verse as the prophet's report of what his ideal watchman saw, I much prefer, by a slight modifi-

cation of the tenses, to make it a continuation of the directions given by the Lord to this supposed watchman, thus: "Let him show what he shall see; and should he see cavalry" (not 'chariots,') "pairs of horsemen" [*i. e.*, two abreast]; "men riding on asses; men riding on camels; let him listen with his utmost attention." The principles of Hebrew syntax fully justify this construction; "Should he see," etc. The context favors it strongly. The watchman's report begins naturally with v. 8. If v. 7 be made part of this report, then v. 9 (first clause) is an unmeaning repetition of its main points. Moreover, under this construction, v. 7 is a very significant part of the prophecy, a pre-intimation in the very directions given to this watchman, of the main points to be revealed.—The fulfillment of this prophecy is wonderfully definite. Xenophon represents the Persians as advancing two by two in pairs as here said; and although no other people are known to have used camels and asses for cavalry service, yet both Herodotus and Xenophon testify that the Persians used them, partly or wholly, to frighten the horses of their enemies.

8. And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights:

The most obvious sense of the English version is that this ideal watchman cried out, "*lion!*" danger! death!! But this announcement seems premature when put before what he says of his diligence and long protracted watching. Besides this, in v. 9 we have his report of what he sees, given in terms corresponding to his instructions as in v. 7. It is therefore worthy at least of a careful consideration whether this other construction be not better, viz., thus: "He cried *like a lion*," "as when a lion roareth" (as in Rev. 10: 3), [saying], "O Lord, (not 'my lord') I have stood faithfully in my post day and night, watching; and lo, I see the very thing which was suggested to me," etc.

9. And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, *with* a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

"Behold, here come men riding; horsemen in pairs," the very thing which the Lord had suggested to him to look for as an indication of the fall of Babylon.—The word rendered "chariot" means by its etymology *a riding*, and the clause signifies therefore not "chariot of men," but men riding, *i. e.*, on horses, camels, or asses.—"And he answered," *i. e.*, resumed his sub-

ject and continued on thus, saying, "Babylon is utterly fallen," the repetition being made for the sake of intensity.—It was specially proper to note that all the graven images of her gods went down in one crash of ruin before the dread majesty of Jehovah. Ah, the king and his court were blaspheming the Almighty in their impious revelry, and extolling their own idols high before him; and hence both they and their gods went down crushed to the earth together!—The Persians, according to their national religion, abhorred all idols and images, and therefore broke in pieces the images of Babylon, we may presume, with unsparing hand.

10. O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

Here is the first intimation of the bearing of this prophecy upon the Lord's people. The prophet turns to them, the Israel of the captivity, saying, O people, long threshed under my sore judgments as the corn of my threshing floor, I have now declared to you what I have heard from the Lord, your own God. He will yet have mercy on you, and will sink proud Babylon for her cruel oppression of you, his people.—The huge threshing wain was a frequent and forcible image of the calamities sent from God in chastisement of his wayward children.

11. The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman what of the night? Watchman what of the night?

12. The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

These verses are deeply enigmatic—probably with design. The name "Dumah" may perhaps be the proper name of a tribe and perhaps a city in Arabia—this being the name of one of Ishmael's sons (Gen. 25: 14). But more probably it is a slight modification of the word Edom, or Idumea, made in allusion to the meaning of the Hebrew word *dumah*, *i. e.*, silence—the land of death. Its use then might signify that Edom should rather be called Dumah; the land brought to perpetual silence.—Seir is but another name for Edom. The man who calls to the prophet to learn the fate of his people cries out from Seir.—He accosts the prophet as a watchman foreseeing the future of nations, and asks, "What of the night?" to be construed either thus: What can you tell us about this terrible night of calamity, now pressing upon us? or perhaps in this way, reaching the

same ultimate sense: What o'clock may it be? How far along are we in this awful night, and when may we look for day?—To this, the watchman responds; "Morning comes and night too: if you wish to inquire, ask on; come and ask again." There will be morning by and by, and there will be night also: and if you please to ask of God's prophets, ask on, ever so much; come again when you will. All this is at least very indefinite. Yet we can scarcely put any other construction upon it than this: Morning will come to the people of God; but no morning comes to *you*; nothing but the dark night of death. You can go on asking for the prophetic future of your land at your pleasure; you can have nothing better or other than this in reply!—Such evermore must be the doom of the wicked—a night that knows no morning! "To the upright there ariseth light out of his darkness;" but God has never said this of the wicked!—These judgments fell on Edom by installments during the period of five centuries before the Christian era. More expanded prophecies of her doom appear, Isaiah 34: Jer. 49: 7-22, Ezek. 25: 12-14, and in Obadiah.

13. The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim.

14. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled.

15. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.

16. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail:

17. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

Here are judgments on Arabia. Kedar was one of its largest provinces, named here (vs. 16, 17) for the whole country.—Dedan, the singular number for Dedanim, is named in connection with Edom and Teman in Jer. 49: 8, and Ezek. 25: 13. It was probably near.—The caravans of Dedan are seen flying before the invading foe, lodging over night in the jungles, *i. e.*, the thickets (not "forests") of the Arabian desert. To them the prophet exhorts the people of Tema to bring water, for they are thirsty, and to anticipate them with bread lest they perish with hunger: for they are fleeing before the drawn sword.—For

thus hath the Lord foreshown, that within one year, sharply defined as the years of one hired to service, all the glory—military strength—of Kedar shall fail, and their mighty men for war shall be reduced to a very small number. There shall be a great destruction in the land.—Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument in at least a part of the dread inflictions, so graphically portrayed here.



## CHAPTER XXII.

THIS chapter records a prophetic burden of calamity on Jerusalem. In a series of prophetic burdens on guilty nations and cities; Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Samaria, Egypt and Arabia; a city so guilty as Jerusalem could not be passed by.—It is called “the valley of *vision*,” as being the home of many inspired prophets and the subject of many divine visions. It is called “the *valley* of vision;” as some suppose with reference to its geographical position, encompassed by mountains (as the mountains are round about Jerusalem” Ps. 125: 2); or as others (*e. g.*, Gesenius) with an eye to the etymological sense of the word here used for “valley”—a place of *confluence*—where things naturally gather together *en masse*; *e. g.*, waters; but referring in this case to the confluence and concentration of prophetic visions at this point.—There is special pertinence in this allusion to her “visions” because the great light she had from God was a chief element in her guilt.—The chapter is peculiar for its special prophecies respecting two individuals, men of prominence, viz., Shebna and Eliakim; the former noted for his wickedness, pride, and pernicious influence; and the latter for his fidelity both to God and to his country, and for his great usefulness in bearing public responsibilities. Since these persons, or at least persons bearing these names, appear in the history during Hezekiah's reign (Isaiah 36: 3) it can scarcely be doubted that the prophet alludes to them, and hence that the siege of Jerusalem here predicted occurred within their lifetime. This circumstance strongly favors the identity of this siege with that which occurred in the reign of Manasseh, of which the historian (2 Chron. 33: 11) says, “Wherefore, the Lord brought upon them (Manasseh and his people) the captains of the host of the king of Assyria who took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon.” This would naturally involve the siege and capture of

**Jerusalem.**—Some of the circumstances found in this description would be likely to occur in any siege of the city. Hence some commentators have thought the description purposely general, so that it might apply to various sieges, and actually cover several which the city sustained, as *e. g.*, from the king of Assyria in the reign of Manasseh; from Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Zedekiah; and from Titus and the Romans, A. D. 70, but the portion respecting Shebna and Eliakim (vs. 15–25) which must be considered as part of this “burden of the valley of vision,” determines its special reference to events near at hand.—This definite mission of the prophet to individual men serves to give point and force to the moral truths borne in this message. Legitimately, it should not only make each of these men say, *verily, God's eye is upon me!* but every other man in the city scarcely less. To impress this seems to have been its purpose.

1. The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops?

As usual, the prophet strikes boldly into the heart of his theme. His prophetic eye sees the city in strange commotion, and he cries out, What has befallen thee? What can have happened, that the whole people throng the house tops?—Oriental houses are built with flat roofs made easily accessible from the inner court. Hence these roofs are places of frequent resort, and for various purposes, sometimes for retirement, or for private devotion, or for a convenient view of distant objects, or (as here) under a general excitement, as in our times the whole city would rush into the streets and to the places of public concourse.

2. Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain *men are* not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle.

This describes, not the usual habits of the city (as the English version seems to imply) but its then present condition as seen in vision by the prophet. “Thou city all astir, full of noise and joyous.” This last term seems to show that the people, though excited, were not yet really alarmed. Their state of mind appears more fully in v. 13—not half aware of their real danger, but apparently self-confident and perhaps recklessly daring.—The last clause indicates that under the siege many would perish otherwise than by the sword, probably by pestilence or famine, or as the next verse intimates, in captivity.

3. All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound

by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, *which* have fled from far.

The original is concise and somewhat obscure. The verse describes conquest and captivity; the princes bound as prisoners by the archers; all that are found, *i. e.*, the masses in distinction from the princes, when found, were chained in couples and driven far away into captivity. They flee, not "*from*" but *to* a very distant land.

4. Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

In sympathy with these sufferings, the prophet gives way to grief and refuses to be comforted. "Therefore I said," "Look not at me;" obtrude not upon my sorrow for grief is sacred. "Let me weep bitterly:" be not in haste to comfort me in reference to this destruction of the daughter of my people—the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Such manifested grief would be both the natural outflow of a noble heart and a legitimate witness to his sincerity, and to the reality of his mission from God.

5. For *it* is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the LORD God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.

In the original, the words rendered, "by the Lord God of Hosts," are closely connected, not with "perplexity," but with "day;" so that the sense is, This is *the Lord's day* for troubling, trampling down and confounding that guilty city, the valley of vision. This day the Lord has brought upon them in righteous judgment, and it is therefore said to belong to the Lord; the Lord's own day. It is a day of undermining walls and of outcries that send their echoes far off to the mountains. Some suppose that, "*To the mountains*," are the very words of the outcry.

6. And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men, *and* horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield.

This means that the men of Elam (which represents Persia), and the men of Kir were in the besieging army.—Kir, supposed to be the modern Kur, was a country on the river Cyrus to which the Assyrians bore their captives from Syria (2 Kings 16: 9), a fact which shows that this was a subject province. The same is true of Elam. Hence both these countries were doubtless represented in the armies of Assyria.—The Persians were famed for their skill with the bow. In describing this army,



the Hebrew has it, "Chariots, men, horsemen;" which may be supposed to mean, chariots, infantry, cavalry.—"Uncovering the shield," is taking it out from its case or covering, to have it in readiness for use.

7. And it shall come to pass, *that* thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

The chariots could operate only in the valley. The prophet sees the best valleys near Jerusalem full of them. Horsemen take their stations even up to the gate. The idea is, push forward; advance upon the city, even up to the very gate.

8. And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armor of the house of the forest.

"*Discover*," in the sense not of finding by search, but of uncovering; here, of removing the covering. The word for "covering" is often used for the vail of the temple, and for the vail worn by females. Tearing off a lady's vail by violence would be specially significant of abuse and peril. The figure seems to follow the phrase, "The daughter of Zion," used for the city of Jerusalem.—This startled the people and made them "look in that day" to the arsenal of the "forest house;" the same which was built by Solomon (1 Kings 7: 2) in which he deposited shields, etc., (1 Kings 10: 17). It was called "the house of the forest" because built of material from the forest of Lebanon.—At this point, the people begin to think seriously of arming themselves to defend the city.

9. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

They now find that through neglect, the city walls are in bad repair; "breached" in many places.—Another wise precaution in preparing for a siege was to gather the waters of the lower pool into a reservoir at some point within their own control.

10. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

A part of the houses were torn down to furnish material (stone) for repairing and strengthening the city walls. Numbering the houses enabled them to decide what proportion they must have. They might have taken every fifth house or tenth.

11. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

The word for "two walls" means a double wall, or a pair of walls built collaterally so as to inclose a space between them for these waters.—So much with wise precaution the people had done for the defense of the city after they had become really awake to the dangers of a siege.—Their great sin comes to view here. It was not that they had fortified the city, but that they had *not* also, and much more even, *looked to God*, the Maker of the city, who had laid its ancient foundations. There is a tacit anthithesis in the form of expression: They *had* looked to the arsenal (v. 8) and to the breaches of the walls (v. 9), but they had *not* looked to Him who had made all, to whom they should have looked first and chiefly.—The Hebrew pronouns represented in the English version by "thereof" and "it," viz., the *thing* God had made or done, probably means the city itself, and all its defenses, yet may possibly refer to the calamities of this invasion as brought on them through God's permissive providence. The latter is a pertinent sense, but in this construction the grammatical antecedent must be understood rather than expressed.

12. And in that day did the LORD God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness. and to girding with sackcloth:

13. And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.

14. And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the LORD God of hosts.

It was probably by the voice of God in his providence rather than through his prophets or in any audible form that the Lord called the people to weeping, mourning, and humiliation. But, behold! (note it with amazement,) instead of these things, you see only mirth and jollity, eating and drinking, in a spirit of reckless infatuation, and with a desperate purpose not to bow before their just and glorious God!—This spirit in the people was so insulting and so abusive to God, and withal it so utterly baffled all his merciful efforts in discipline to reclaim them, that he solemnly declared to the prophet that he would not pardon this iniquity, long as they lived. It should not be washed away, but must be fearfully punished!—In v. 13 the original is very

concise, and is well rendered in the English version save that instead of, "Let us eat and drink," the original has only, "*eat-ing, drinking,*" for to-morrow we die. They mean to say, "What do *we* care for this call from the Lord to mourning, humiliation and repentance! We shall do no such thing! If we must die, let it come, and let us take our fill of earthly pleasure while we can." This spirit scoffs at God's forewarnings, and disdains to be moved by his appeals, enforced however urgently by his providence. Despairing of mercy or despising it if it were possible, men say, Let us have the good of sin to the very last, and then take what comes!—No wonder that such a spirit should be insufferably offensive and grievous to God. The most bitter thing in it is that it shuts the door of hope in their case forever. Such moral hardness and infatuation defy all further efforts to reclaim and save. It is like the sin against the Holy Ghost, precluding forgiveness because it bars out repentance and makes it morally impossible. Alas, the strange and horrible infatuation of sin!

15. Thus saith the LORD GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, *even* unto Shebna, which is over the house, *and say,*

16. What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, *as* he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, *and* that graveth a habitation for himself in a rock?

At this point the "burden" becomes personal, pertaining first to a man by the name of Shebna, and next to another by the name of Eliakim. As said above both these names appear in the history of Hezekiah (chap. 36: 3), representing men of prominent official positions. It appears here that they were strong contrasts in character.—The word for "treasurer" means a personal and dear friend, and has no reference to the office of treasurer. The additional fact that he was "over the house," *i. e.*, the king's house, the palace—defines his office. He had charge of the palace. But instead of giving due attention to his responsibilities and to the public interests intrusted to him, he was only building a magnificent tomb for himself in the rock. Hence this message from God to him through the prophet; Go and say to him, What right hast thou here, or *whom* hast thou here—*i. e.*, who of thy family is, or is to be, buried here—that thou shouldst be making thyself an enduring sepulchre in this city?—The key to the force of these questions is supposed to lie in the fact that Shebna was not only a wicked man, but a foreigner, his name indicating this; and therefore a man who had no right to a sepulchre in this sacred city. Fur-

thermore, the praise given to Eliakim for his fidelity in his post of service, and the thrusting out of Shebna and giving his responsibilities to Eliakim, imply that Shebna had been reckless of his duty, and careful only to prepare a splendid and enduring sepulchre for himself.

17. Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee.

18. He will surely violently turn and toss thee *like* a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory *shall be* the shame of thy lord's house.

19. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.

The doom of Shebna is given here in bold figures. I translate thus; "Behold, the Lord will hurl thee down headlong, O man, and will thoroughly cover thee, and then roll thee into a roll like a ball [thrown] into a broad land [open and wide on all sides] and there shalt thou die, and there thy glorious chariots shall be the shame of thy father's house." The sense is that with the utmost violence the Lord would cast him down, roll him up into a ball, and sling him out of Jerusalem into the heathen land where he belonged, and where there would be ample room for him to roll far away. There his former glory should be the disgrace of his lord who had elevated to such responsibilities a man so unworthy.

20. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:

21. And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut, and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Eliakim, a good and true man, should take his official position and fill it well. With the orientals, the "key" was a badge of office and trust.

23. And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

24. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels

of small quantity, from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons.

The oriental "nail" was quite unlike ours. It was a tent-pin, either driven into the ground in order to attach to it the corners of the tent-cloth; or driven into the posts of the tent or the house to hang upon it the cooking and kitchen utensils. The latter sense comes to view here. This tent-pin fastened securely, is used instead of a cupboard for the common utensils of the oriental family.—Two figures are used here to represent the stability and fidelity of Eliakim. He is this tent-pin on which all the glory of his father's house—all the offspring, great and small, high and low—hang in dependence; and he is also a seat of honor ("glorious throne") for them all to sit upon. His name is a tower of strength and of respectability to them all.

25. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that *was* upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

In a grammatical point of view, the most natural construction would apply this to Eliakim, and make it a prediction of his fall. But there is no apparent reason for such an event, and it does not fill out the moral of the case as we might expect. Most commentators agree therefore that this figure must be transferred to Shebna—as much as to say—Shebna has had these very responsibilities upon himself; but he utterly failed to bear them faithfully; hence the nail came out; everything hung upon it fell, and great was the fall thereof. This was what the Lord had said. The event fulfilled his word.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

TYRE and Zidon, great and ancient maritime cities of Phenicia—Tyre the greater, but Zidon the more ancient—were situated on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and very near the north-west corner of the Canaan occupied by Israel. They come into notice frequently in the Scriptures, both in history and in prophecy. They were specially distinguished for their commerce and their consequent commercial relations with their colonies on the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. Indeed, at some periods, these commercial relations reached every known

country of the world.—Jeremiah prophesied of these countries very briefly (chaps. 25: 22, and 47: 4), but Ezekiel very fully of Tyre (chaps. 26–28).—This prophecy of Isaiah refers frequently to her commercial and maritime relations; depicts the terror of her fall; but indicates that she shall soon recover from this first great calamity, and shall ultimately consecrate her wealth to the living God.

1. The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

Tarshish (Tartessus in Spain) was one of her most important and remote colonies. Hence “ships of Tarshish” were of the largest class, and here represent all that sailed the great sea. The prophet calls on them to wail because Tyre is so completely destroyed that there remains no house and no harbor. They learn this sad news at the land of Chittim, supposed to be the island of Cyprus. It is known that Tyre had a colony there.

2. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

The Hebrew word for “isle” means a maritime coast, whether of an island proper or of the main land of a continent. The “inhabitants of the isle” may therefore be those who dwell on the coasts of the Mediterranean generally, in trade with Tyre; or more specifically, the people of Phenicia, itself a country *on the coast* of the great sea. The fact that the same words in v. 6 refer to Phenicia and her great cities, Tyre and Zidon, favors the same meaning here. But the course of thought from the preceding verse leads us to expect an allusion to all the people on the shores of the Mediterranean, reached and enriched by her commerce.—“The merchants of Zidon” include those of Tyre as well, Zidon being probably used to include Tyre.—The prophet’s call is, Be silent in grief and amazement, all ye people who have been enriched by the commerce of Tyre.

3. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

“Sihor,” the dark and muddy, is the Hebrew name for the Nile, the word rendered “river” in the next clause being its Egyptian name. Exegetically the main question on this verse is whether the “great waters” define the location of Tyre as an island imbosomed in the great waters, or speak of the “waters” as the high-way for the transit of her products of commerce,

*i. e., through the great waters.* The latter seems to me the most probable. Over the great waters come to her the grains of Egypt, the harvests of the Nile. She is a great emporium for the nations.

4. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon : for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

This does not mean *ashamed* as one who has done some mean thing; but *confounded*, amazed as one upon whom some astounding calamity has suddenly fallen.—The “sea,” *i. e.*, the “strength” (or mistress) “of the sea,” is a poetical conception for Tyre herself, considered as filling the sea with the life and activity of commerce. The Hebrew language naturally represents cities as females, *i. e.*, mothers or daughters. Here Tyre has been a mother of colonies and kingdoms. But all suddenly, she becomes barren, no longer bearing such children or nourishing them up to maturity, wealth and power.

5. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.

The choice lies between two constructions: (1) When the tidings reached Egypt, they (the Egyptians) were in anguish at the report concerning Tyre; or (2) as at the report of previous judgments on Egypt, so were the nations in anguish when they heard of Tyre so fallen! The latter I prefer as being more true to the sense of the Hebrew words which strongly express a comparison of Tyre with Egypt in the point indicated, and also as giving a more important sense. The nations at some former time had been startled by God’s judgments on Egypt; so were they now under these tidings of Tyre.

6. Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.

Pass over the sea, ye people of Tyre, to Tarshish for safety. They did so to some extent no doubt during the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, and yet more in the siege by Alexander the Great. The prophecy refers mainly to the former.

7. *Is* this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

This interrogation gives life and force. No direct answer was sought or expected.—Tyre had been a proud, busy, exultant city, flourishing from very ancient times, having been known to

history in the age of David and Solomon. But her own feet (by means of her ships) should bear her far away to her most remote colonies to sojourn. She is thought of here (as in v. 4) as a mother, and hence as wandering away *on her feet*, a helpless captive.

8. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning *city*, whose merchants *are* princes, whose traffickers *are* the honorable of the earth?

Of whose purpose come such results, that Tyre, so long the dispenser of crowns and founder of kingdoms, should fall so low: Tyre whose merchants became princes in the new states which she built up, and whose tradesmen stood in the highest repute among the nations?

9. The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, *and* to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.

The plan and purpose were of God who sought to stain the pride of man's glorying and to *make light* all the *heavy men and things* of earth. Such is the contrasted significance of these Hebrew verbs. Perhaps the rich were then as now accounted the "heavy," "solid" men of society; but God would make them light, taking away their wealth and with it their honor and their pride.

10. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: *there is* no more strength.

"Daughter of Tarshish," is thou daughter, Tarshish—meaning Tarshish herself. "Passing through her land as a river" probably means to pass freely and without hindrance.—The word rendered "strength" means a *girdle*. Used as a figure, this might mean either what would prepare the limbs for free activity in the sense of girding the loins; or what would restrain and confine, as a girdle did the loose garments of the ancients. Probably here the latter is the sense. There is no more restraint binding you to another's will. This would imply that Tyre had been rigid if not even oppressive toward her colonies. Now they breathe and move more freely.

11. He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant *city*, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

"He" who "stretches out his hand" is the Lord. The Hebrew word for merchant is *canaan*, one who gets money. The



meaning is that God had given command respecting the city of **canaan** (the merchant), viz., Tyre, to destroy her strong holds.

12. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

The name "Zidon" is used here where Tyre is chiefly meant. Zidon might be involved in her fate.—She had been a joyous city (v. 7) but shall be so no more. "Oppressed is rather *violated*, said of Tyre considered as a virgin, and indicating the severity and fearfulness of her calamity.—Go over the sea to Chittim (Cyprus); but even thither thy enemies shall pursue thee and leave thee no rest.

13. Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not *till* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; *and* he brought it to ruin.

Manifestly this is an outlook upon the military power which conquered Tyre and laid it desolate. "Lo," says the prophet, "See the land of the Chaldeans." This people (the Chaldeans) had no existence [as a nation]; the Assyrians founded it [the city Babylon, or the state, Chaldea,] for tribes who had [till then] lived in the desert; they (these Chaldeans) reared his military towers; those of the besieging army: they shall demolish her palaces [those of Tyre], and make them a ruin.—The word for "raised up" means rather they utterly *cast down*—*razed* in the sense of laying bare its foundations. This clause is parallel to the one that follows and not to the one that precedes it, as is shown both by the meaning of the verb and by the gender of the pronoun, represented by "thereof." The Hebrew speaks of *his* towers—those of the besieging power; but of *her* palaces (those of Tyre) and of making her (Tyre) a ruin.—Xenophon states that these primitive Chaldeans previously followed the Nomadic life on the wild mountains of Armenia. Some think them Cushite in their origin, and resident in Arabia.—The far reaching ken of prophetic vision saw this Chaldean people, the future conquerors of Tyre, before they became a power among the nations. This reference to Chaldea shows that the prophecy refers to the conquest of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, and not to the earlier assault upon it by Shalmanezzer king of Assyria; nor to the later, a real destruction, by Alexander the Great.

14. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

Here the prediction of the fall of Tyre closes, much as it be-

gan, with a summons to her ships to bewail the fall of the great city.

15. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot.

16. Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.

17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

18. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

There would be a chasm in the commercial life of Tyre for seventy years. Then she would return to her former life of trade, with this difference however; that her gains should not be hoarded, but consecrated to the Lord and used by the Lord's servants to meet their necessary wants in food and clothing. This is obviously the course of thought in these verses.—The figures used by the prophet which associate a life of trade with the life of a harlot strike us with our ideas as very singular. This sense of incongruity may be somewhat relieved by these two considerations: (1) That the Hebrews held the mercantile profession in low esteem: and (2) That the figure of a harlot as here applied to illustrate the case of Tyre may not include the whole of her life and character, but only certain aspects of it, especially her means of bringing herself into notice after a season of neglect or oblivion; viz., by going about singing songs and playing on her instruments.—So, "after the end of seventy years it shall be to Tyre as the song of a harlot." (Heb). She shall pursue a course analogous to that of the harlot, to reinstate herself in her former business of trade. She must *advertise* largely, and so bring herself into "remembrance" as the great business agent of the commercial world. Then also her business of traffic is compared to fornication [illicit intercourse] with foreign nations—a comparison growing out of that feature of exclusiveness in the Hebrew state which precluded all intimate associations with foreign people, accounting it perilous to the pure worship of God and sure to result in idolatry.—As to

the fulfillment of the last verses, the first installment came with the revival of trade and prosperity in Tyre which occurred not far from seventy years after her siege by Nebuchadnezzar. The second installment, her consecration of her wealth to the living God, had a partial fulfillment when the gospel blessed that region in the primitive age of the Christian Church; but is (we may hope) to have a fulfillment much more signal, and indeed complete, when all the nations shall know the Lord and all the wealth of the world shall be laid at the feet of the King of kings and Prince of peace. When the prophecies in Isaiah 60 shall be fulfilled, we may look for the wealth of meaning underlying this chapter to be fully realized. When "all they from Sheba shall come bringing gold and incense to show forth the praises of the Lord;" when all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to Zion; when the isles shall wait upon the Messiah and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring Zion's sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God;" then also shall "the merchandise of Tyre be holiness to the Lord." Whatever nations or people may represent Tyre then, will fulfill these glorious conditions.



## CHAPTER XXIV..

THE next four chapters constitute one subject and should be studied as one whole. It is a prophecy of those great providential events that clustered round the fall of the kingdom and capital of Judah. The desolations of Jerusalem and the captivity of the remnant of its population are in the foreground; but farther back lies the fall of other great cities and kingdoms before the same Chaldean power; and still more remotely, the fall of Babylon and of the sovereignty of Chaldea. That was an era of surpassing energy in those agencies of providence that operate the government of God over nations as such, and especially those which administer its retributions. The Lord came down most signally at that time to take in hand his own apostate people and scourge them for their correction and reformation. For this very reason, he could not let other nations, less guilty only because less enlightened, pass altogether unpunished.—Into this scene of vigorous retributive agencies, compassing the wide world in their sweep, these chapters introduce us, setting forth the fearfulness of this far reaching devastation, but also the milder cast of the inflictions that fall on his own people, and the mingled

consolations vouchsafed to them under their deepest afflictions; the merciful designs of discipline, and the broad difference between the discipline that aims to purify and save on the one hand, and on the other, the judgments that cut down the incorrigible, never to rise again.—This prophecy is eminently rich in those gleams of light and joy that soften the gloom of the most appalling calamities ever brought of God upon his chosen people. It would seem that this is their great moral lesson—a precious one for the people of God in every age.—Critics have disagreed widely in their interpretation of these chapters. It could not be profitable to readers who are not professional critics to discuss or even present all these various opinions. The only point upon which I have seriously doubted and labored is the question whether to restrict this chap. 24, to the fall of Judah and Jerusalem before the Chaldean power, or to take in also the fall of other contiguous nations before the same Chaldeans nearly at the same time; and ultimately the fall of the Chaldean power itself. After a somewhat careful examination I incline to the latter view, partly because it accounts more readily for various apparent references to the burdens [predicted calamities on various nations] contained in chaps. 13–23, and partly because it gives a more satisfactory explanation of several passages in this prophecy. The latter will be noted as we proceed.—With this statement of the general course of thought throughout these four chapters, I trust their exposition will be clear, satisfactory and useful.

1. Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

The Hebrew word rendered “the earth” more commonly means the entire known world, yet sometimes only the land of Palestine. The latter I judge to be the primary sense here, yet by no means to the exclusion of the other known nations of Western Asia; that is, the prophet had his eye mainly on the desolations that swept over Judah, specially at the time of the Chaldean conquest and captivity, yet not altogether ignoring the fact that most of the other nations were subverted before the same great conquering power.—The figures in this verse are bold and strong. As one inverts a bottle, turning it upside down, and its liquid contents come forth gurgling, splurging, dashing; so the Lord had taken up these kingdoms and poured out their whole populations. The two first verbs, rendered “make empty” and “make waste” both carry the idea of emptying a bottle.

2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the

priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

This outpouring observes no respect of persons. All classes—people and priests, servant and master—share the common doom. The “lender” differs from the “taker of usury” in the point of charging no interest.

3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

The Lord’s utterance of this word may be seen in Lev. 26, and Deut. 27 and 28. The fact that God warned them so seasonably and so fearfully, served to aggravate their guilt very greatly.

4. The earth mourneth *and* fadeth away, the world languisheth *and* fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

“Earth” and “world” must refer primarily to Palestine. The “haughty people” (in Hebrew “the lofty”) are either the higher classes in social position, or the proud of spirit, or those who combine both. None were so high in position, none so proud in spirit, as to escape the general doom. It fell with special force on these classes.

5. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

The land itself was polluted in the eye of God by the sins of its inhabitants.—The people who had “transgressed the laws,” changed the ordinances, and “broken the everlasting covenant,” can be no other than the Jews. They only had this covenant, these ordinances and laws. This feature in the description requires us to apply the passage specially to the Jews.

6. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

The “curse” which devoured the land [“ate up” is the Hebrew] naturally refers to those fearful curses which God through

Moses denounced against idoltary and apostasy. See Deut. 27 and 28. The verb rendered "are desolate" combines the ideas of both sin and punishment, *i. e.*, it signifies sinning, but implies its punishment. These ideas were (rightly) associated very strongly in the Hebrew mind and language.—"Burned" probably means, destroyed *as* by fire, and should not be pressed as to its literal sense. The various agencies of war, siege, famine, sword, with fire also, cut off almost the entire population when Jerusalem fell before the Chaldeans.

7. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh.

8. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.

9. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.

To give the greater vividness to this picture of desolation, the prophet specifies various forms of sensual pleasure to say that all these are now forgotten. Amid the general distress none can find either amusement or relief in wine or in song. They lose all appetite for such pleasure. It makes the scene the more life-like to represent the wine and the vine as themselves bewailing the calamities of the people.

10. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in.

"Confusion" as here said relates not primarily to social order, but to the ruin of all that constituted the city externally. The word is used (Gen. 1: 2) for the chaotic state of the elements before the six days' work began. The thought here is that the city is so utterly broken down as to be a mere chaos of fragments and ruins. Not a house can be entered. There is no place for a home or even for a shelter.

11. *There* is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.

This cannot be a call for wine for convivial purposes. V. 9 forbids such a sense. But there might be many "ready to perish" for whose sake there might be a "cry for wine." This is "in the streets," for there were no open houses into which the perishing could be taken.—All joy *goes down* like the setting sun, leaving the world in darkness. The mirth of the land is borne away as into captivity. The Hebrew verbs suggest these figures.

12. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

Desolation and nothing else remains in the city; all else is gone.—The “gate” (in oriental cities one of the most noted localities) is smitten down into ruins. In all, a sad picture of utter waste and destruction.

13. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, *there shall be* as the shaking of an olive tree, *and* as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.

A closer rendering of the Hebrew would better give the connection of this verse with the preceding, thus: “*For* so shall it [the city of people] be in the midst of the land among the nations, as the shaking of the olive and as the grape-gleaning when the harvest is finished.” The previous verses had spoken of a state of great desolation throughout the city, yet with only few words about the people. This verse fills out the view of the desolations of the city by representing the surviving people as only the scattering olives and grapes, left after the harvest is finished. The ruin is complete, “*for*” only the smallest remnant of people survive. Even these are now seen, not in their own home cities, but in the midst of the wide earth, captive among foreign nations.

14. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea.

15. Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, *even* the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

Quick as thought is the transition here from sorrow to joy. The few scattered fugitives, seen as captives in foreign lands, are suddenly impressed with the majesty and glory of God and break forth into exulting praises. “*They*” is made emphatic in the original; even these few, although under the sorest of earthly trials, “lift up their voice and sing” for joy; “because of the majesty of the Lord, they cry aloud from the sea.” Some render the last clause, “more than the sea;” *i. e.*, louder than the roar of many waters. Others, “more than at the Red Sea” when Moses and Miriam led their triumphant song. But the context favors the sense of the English version, “from the sea” on every side, *i. e.*, from the extreme ends of the earth. Wherever the Jewish exiles may be, in whatever remote land, they strike their

notes of joyous praise in view of the majesty and glory of their God. They see that God is good and glorious even in his sternest discipline and in his most terrible judgments; and therefore they praise him. The chastisements of God upon them have been a pure blessing.—In v. 15, we may best suppose that the prophet in sympathy with this song interposes his exhortation to all people in the remotest ends of the earth to join in it and give glory to Jehovah, God of Israel. "Wherefore," *i. e.*, because of his great majesty, "all ye of the east, glorify Jehovah, and all ye of the west, in the isles of the sea, glorify the name of the Lord God of Israel." The word rendered "fires," taken by some to mean the fires of affliction, seems rather to be used here for the regions of the east, the orient, in antithesis with the regions of the west, the isles of the great Mediterranean—"isles" here, as usual, being put for all the maritime countries reached by crossing the sea. The word for "fires," properly means *light*. Modern critics generally agree that it refers here to the regions of the rising sun. The sentiment of the verse therefore is; Let all the ends of the earth join in this praise to the mighty and all glorious God.

16. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, *even* glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.

In this verse there is a transition back from joy to grief, equally sudden with that from grief to joy in v. 14. "From the uttermost part," the extreme wings [Heb.] "of the earth have we heard songs" of praise, "comely for the righteous." "And then I [saw the dark side again and] "said Woe to me; woe, woe, to me," etc. "Glory to the righteous," cannot well mean, ascribing glory to the righteous God, because this word for glory is never used of the glory of God, and never for his perfections. On the contrary, it is used for Palestine as the glory of all lands, and freely for whatever human things are beautiful and comely.—It is mostly conceded now that the word rendered, "my leanness," means I am consumed, used up, overwhelmed by this view of fearful desolation that comes up before me, corresponding to the parallel clause, "Woe unto me."—At this point a new view of over-spreading calamity comes before the prophet, perhaps taking a wider range than before and including the fall of Babylon as well as of other nations previously subdued by her. The allusion to "treacherous deal-



ers dealing treacherously" suggests Babylon, precisely this having been said (chap. 21: 2) of those who took that city.

17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *are* upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.

18. And it shall come to pass, *that* he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.

19. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.

20. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

Successive judgments serve to make the desolation more and yet more complete. Whoever escapes the first falls into the second; and if any escape the second, they are taken in the third. —The "windows on high opened" suggest the deluge of Noah's time, the thought being that men can no more escape now than then. —The earthquake, rending open the earth's crust and engulfing cities, is the next figure. —In v. 20, the "cottage" is supposed by modern critics to be rather the hammock suspended on limbs of trees for the convenience of watching one's garden. The earth swings to and fro like such a hammock before the wind. —The sins of the world lie heavy upon it; God is calling nations to their solemn account; some at least shall fall to rise more.

Probably we must assume a somewhat special reference in these verses to Babylon, yet not to the exclusion of Judah and Jerusalem. Babylon was doomed to fall so utterly as to rise no more. Precisely this is not said of Jerusalem.

21. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

Some have supposed "the host of the high ones on high" to be the fallen angels, here in antithesis with guilty kings of the earth. Perhaps so, yet not surely. They may be those men who are specially distinguished for their high position and their pride.

22. And they shall be gathered together, *as* prison-

ers are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.

The last word, rendered "visited" is used both in the sense of visiting to punish and of visiting to relieve and restore. In this case commentators are divided between these two possible senses of the word. Those guilty kings and proud men, long imprisoned, are supposed by some to be ultimately visited for their punishment; by others, for their deliverance. It is supposable that the expression is left in this general and indefinite form for the purpose of implying that they fall into two classes, some subdued to penitence, like the captive Jews, and hence visited in mercy: others proving themselves incorrigible, are visited, like Belshazzar, with final destruction.

23. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

The glory of Jehovah reigning in Mount Zion and administering his providential government so signally over the nations, eclipses the splendor of both moon and sun, so that the moon shall blush and the sun be ashamed in the presence of the far higher glory of the great God! This assumes that the contest has made glorious revelations of God's justice and majesty in his moral and providential government over the nations of the earth. It is in the presence of such manifestations that the moon and the sun are ashamed to display the rush-lights of their glory.—Under the dispensation of Moses and David, Mount Zion and Jerusalem were naturally and truly the locality of Jehovah's earthly throne. "His ancients" are his elders, those who under God ruled Israel considered as his church and people.



## CHAPTER XXV.

IN the course of this extended prophecy (chaps. 24-27) the prophet had reached the fall of Babylon at the close of chap. 24. He therefore gives us here, as he is wont, an appropriate song to be sung in praise of God for that destruction and for its results of deliverance to his people, vs. 1-5; then, vs. 6-9 from

this minor and antecedent victory for Zion he looks down into the future to another analogous but greater victory which will bring home the Gentile nations to a joyful feast in Mount Zion; which will pour the light of day over the lands where darkness had reigned; wipe tears away and bring joy to the earth in the salvation of the gospel; closing vs. 10-12, with the utter down-treading of Zion's enemies, despite their puny efforts to resist the Almighty.

1. O LORD, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things*; thy counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.

In this song, the prophet speaks *for* the church of God, expressing sentiments and emotions appropriate to her case. In its spirit as well as its occasion, this song corresponds to that in chap. 12.—“Thou art *my* God;” I love to honor and adore thee as such; “I will extol thee and I will praise thy name,” *i. e.*, will recognize and proclaim thy glorious qualities of character and thy deeds of power and mercy. “For thou hast wrought wonderfully; thy counsels (purposes in reference to saving thy people) long since predicted, have proved to be altogether true.

2. For thou hast made of a city a heap; of a defenced city a ruin : a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

“*For*” (this is the proof) thou hast utterly destroyed Babylon. Thou hast changed that city, even that strongly fortified city, into a heap of ruins: palaces of strangers (foreign and alien from Israel's God) thou hast so entirely destroyed that they shall constitute a city no more; it shall never be built again. So Babylon lies to-day, unbuilt, a pile of ruins.

3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

The most pertinent application of the words, “the city of the terrible” (*i. e.*, of the tyrants) is to Babylon herself. So construed, the verse need not imply a religious fear, a glorifying of God in the sense of pious, sincere praise; but only that they will be compelled to acknowledge his power and to fear his wrath. So much must have been true, and this is an appropriate truth to be introduced here. Zion sings it: Thy manifestations of power and of righteous retribution were so terrible that even proud Babylon is compelled to acknowledge and fear thee.

4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a

strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm *against* the wall.

Not only did the Almighty compel "the strong people to glorify him," but he also condescended to the low estate of his suffering people; lifted them up from their extreme depression, and became their strength and their salvation. The Jews in their captivity are "the poor and the needy;" weak, dependent, naked under storms and burning heats (figurative), pelted by hailstones of adversity. But at every point the great God became their refuge. All this wealth of figures and images is simple and plain.—The "terrible" is the same word as in v. 3, meaning their formidable Chaldean tyrants, whose breath is thought of as a storm-blast which dashes upon the defenseless Jews as a tornado beats against a wall.

5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; *even* the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

"The strangers" and the "terrible ones" are still the Chaldeans. Their "branch," corresponding to their "noise" should be read "their *song*" of triumph, corresponding to the clangor of battle. The figure represents the mighty God as bringing down this noise and song, even as he lessens the scorching sun-heats by the shadow of a cloud. Quietly, noiselessly, but with wonderful power, does God by interposing his clouds, abate the fierce heats of the tropical sun. So the Lord brought down the fierceness of the Chaldeans' burning wrath. Of this wrath, the noise of battle and the song of triumph are here the exponents.

6. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

As said above, the deliverance wrought for God's people in their restoration from Babylon suggested the yet greater deliverance wrought for the Gentile nations in bringing them from darkness to light, from their state of utter want and famine to the fullness and fatness of this rich gospel feast. "This mountain" can be no other than Mount Zion, thought of as a symbol of the gospel church. The Lord prepares this feast in a very special sense indeed, since Jesus gives his own flesh as the bread of life. With figures of speech, luxuriant, full and rich, the

prophet sets forth the fatness and abundance of this feast: "fat things;" wines long kept standing on their lees; fat things full of marrow; wines not only kept long on their lees but well refined. The Hebrews had no higher ideas of a perfect feast than those which are grouped together here.—To heighten the wealth of this prediction, the Lord prepares this feast *for all people*. So the next verse has it; God removes the veil that has long covered "*all people*" and has been spread over "*all nations*." This therefore is the world's great jubilee. Correspondingly the same great fact is revealed in Ps. 22. The world's great sufferer, having borne our griefs and passed through the dreadful agony, makes his thanksgiving feast; his friends partake with him; "the meek eat and are satisfied;" "all the ends of the world remember and return unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before him." The essential ideas are that Jesus, having suffered, provides a most magnificent gospel feast; gathers all nations home around his table and to his heart of infinite love; sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied, rejoicing forever in the fruits unto life and salvation which come of his vicarious death.

7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

"In this mountain," here as in v. 6, locates these triumphs of divine mercy *in the gospel church*, of which Mount Zion was the natural symbol.—Another figure appears here, a plain one however, used abundantly by both prophets and apostles. The heathen sit in darkness; a thick veil rests upon them; but God removes this veil, takes away the covering and lets in the full light of gospel day upon their joyful eyes. See Isaiah 9: 2 and 35: 5, and 42: 6, 7. Luke 1: 78, 79. John 8: 12. Acts 26: 17, 18. 2 Cor. 4: 4, and 1 Thess. 5: 5.

8. He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

If we admit the general strain of this passage (vs. 6-9) to have authority as a context to influence the meaning of this word "*death*," it must comprise such earthly evils as are actually removed during this present life on earth. That is, we are not to take it literally, as meaning the annihilation of death itself, but figuratively as comprehending other great earthly evils which the gospel does in fact remove in the present state of hu-

man existence. Dr. Alexander remarks, "The true sense seems to be that all misery and suffering comprehended under the generic name of *death* should be completely done away."—"In victory" is not the sense of the Hebrew, but "*forever*."—"Tears wiped from all faces" is both universal in its range and exquisitely deep and rich in its significance. But inasmuch as this prediction refers to the Gentile nations at some then future time, it can by no means apply to all ages of the world so as to sustain the doctrine of universal salvation. At some period [how long is not said] this shall be true in general of the human family. So much the prophecy means; no more. This is precious.—The "rebuke" (reproach) that has lain upon the people of God in the view of all the nations will now be taken away. Christianity will be known and appreciated, and God's people will be estimated according to their true character. The Lord hath promised and will perform.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

In view of such magnificent and most blessed results, what can be more fitting than a new song of praise? Will not the ransomed sing then with full heart and voice, "Lo, this is *our God*;" these are his own glorious works of mercy; he proves himself mighty to save. "We have waited for him"—long, patiently, in faith long tried, but fed and kept living by his precious grace: we knew he would come to save us at last; we see him now just at hand. "This is our own Jehovah"—ever faithful; "we have waited for him," and now that he has come, "we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Why not?

10. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

"In this mountain," here as in vs. 6, 7, locates these manifestations of God's presence and power, in his church, the central throne of his gospel kingdom. Here the Lord's *hand* (his emblem of power) will abide ["rest"] and here it will reveal itself gloriously over his enemies.—Moab, as also Edom, is used comprehensively for the enemies of Israel. Historically both were long the jealous rivals of the Lord's people, often in relations of bitter hostility. Here Moab is seen in vision trodden down as straw is trodden down by the cattle in the waters of the dunghill. The more ancient and approved reading inserts "waters" before "dunghill." This change adds force to the

figure, so far as it appears in this verse, and makes a pertinent connection with the next verse also.

11. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands.

12. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

Moab is here seen swimming, striking out his hands in the waters of the yard to save himself by swimming; but God baffles his efforts, and brings down his pride and all the plots or devices of his hands. All his efforts to resist the agencies by which God is humbling his pride and punishing his sin avail him nothing. His high walls and towers the Lord demolishes utterly, so that they lie level with the dust. The Hebrew words give a strong sense of lofty and inaccessible towers, thus: "The inaccessibility of the height of thy walls he brings down, lays low, and causes to touch the earth, even the dust."—Such terms, so accumulated, carry our thought to the lofty walls of Babylon, as if he would say; Though Moab were to build her walls high as Babylon did hers, yet God would bring them utterly down to the dust. If we consider Moab as a representative name, standing for the embittered enemies of Zion, the prophet's thought may naturally have been on Babylon as well.—The moral of the prophecy is that however much those enemies may exert themselves in their war upon Zion, or may struggle against the judgments of the Almighty, or may have lifted their city walls and towers high toward heaven for their defense or their glory, God will find it easy to plunge them into the waters of the lunghill; take down their pride, and level their city walls and towers to the dust. Human power arrayed against God is of no account when once he arises to confound and abase his foes.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE first words of this chapter show its connection with the two chapters that precede it, and also what its subject is, viz., an appropriate song of praise on occasion of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. The last two verses (vs. 20, 21) suggest beautifully and tenderly that the day of suffer-

ing and peril is not altogether past, yet will not be long protracted.

1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will *God* appoint *for* walls and bulwarks.

"Sung in the land of Judah," *i. e.*, shortly after the restoration from captivity. It would be appropriate to those times. —"We have a strong city"—*we* too as well as the Chaldeans, and indeed *we* much more than they, for our city is far stronger than theirs. With manifest allusion to "the fortress of the high fort of thy walls," in the verse next preceding this, God's people say here, God gives us for our walls and bulwarks his own salvation. He interposes to save us in every peril, and this becomes far more effective than such walls and bulwarks as theirs.

2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

Open the gates of your strong and goodly city, and let the righteous people come in who keep the truth, *i. e.*, who have the truth of God and obey it. The new restored community in Judea opens its gates to make welcome all the real friends of God and of his truth. "Come thou with us and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good of Israel."

3. Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace *whose* mind is stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

The word translated "mind," is an unusual one in this sense. It manifestly conceives of mind as constituted, created of God, with self-acting powers. Mind thought of as so made, when it voluntarily supports itself on thee, thou wilt keep in peace, peace, *i. e.*, in absolute, intense peace, because it reposes in thee. This unusual yet well selected word suggests that man is so constituted that if he will he *can* swing off from God, strike out for a fancied and cherished independence, and so disdain and repel the very idea of relying on God. Yet if, instead of doing this, he rests himself on God alone, he will be kept by him in perfect peace because of such faith.—This sentiment the Jews embrace in their song as the result of their own rich experience during their recent captivity. It is a blessed truth, confirmed by the conscious and joyful experience of thousands in every age.

4. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.



On the basis of this truth the song rests this exhortation; "Trust ye in the Lord forever." It is always safe, always blessed; "for in the Lord Jehovah is a rock of ages." So the Hebrew has it, including under the figure of a rock the two ideas of a refuge and of a sure foundation. The original makes this special name of God emphatic by repetition; "For in Jah Jehovah"—Jah being a contraction for Jehovah. It should be borne in mind that while all the names of God are significant, each of some one attribute, the special significance of this name is, *God as faithful to his promises*, ever true to those who trust him. Immutability is perhaps the primary idea, he who changes never; but the practical and ultimate result is, one who being changeless, never forgets his promises—experiences no change in the state of mind which gave the promises; one who continues evermore the same, and therefore is ever true and faithful. This is his memorial name, a name to be remembered through all the interval, however long, between promise and fulfillment, till you see the promise verified. See Hosea 12: 5, and Ex. 3: 13-15.

5. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, *even* to the ground; he bringeth it *even* to the dust.

Here is one proof of God's enduring love and faithfulness, viz., his overthrow of Babylon to deliver his people. "*For* he has brought down those who dwelt on high, behind walls so lofty as to be deemed impregnable." The order of the clauses according to the most ancient punctuation, is this; "For he has brought down the dwellers on high, the city deemed inaccessible; he will lay it low, yea he will lay it low even to the ground, and will even mingle it with the dust;" (literally, "make it touch even the dust.") The distinction between what had been done (in thought) in the first clause and what should yet be done in the future, expressed in the remaining clauses, was doubtless intentional, to indicate that while its first capture by Cyrus brought the power and pride of the city down, yet the utter subversion of its walls was a thing of time, fully done only long afterward. Statements of historic fact made so precise in prophecy two centuries before the fulfillment began and at least ten centuries before the work was completed, serve to show with what case the Omniscient mind "calls things that are not as though they were."

6. The foot shall tread it down, *even* the feet of the poor, *and* the steps of the needy.

The "poor" the "needy," the weak and frail Jews, tread joyously and with exultation over the fallen walls and the smitten

power of proud Babylon. The Hebrew words for "poor" and "needy," do not mean the penniless or the breadless, but the weak in point of national and military power.

7. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

The pathway for the just is straight and even; God who is upright makes their way level and smooth. The word rendered "weigh" may mean either to weigh or to make even and level. Since the orientals weighed with scales, it is easy to see how these two senses should meet in one word. The context here requires the latter sense, that of making level their pathway. God smooths the roughnesses of the way for his trustful people.

8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of *our* soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

With an eye to the long years of God's discipline and judgment upon the nation while in captivity, the prophet's song continues, "When thy pathway assigned in thy providence for thy people was rough with judgments—sore inflictions of national calamity—even then, O Lord, did we wait still on thee in patient, trustful hope; the longing desire of our soul was toward thee and toward the remembrance of thy name"—the word "name" embodying (as usual) the divine perfections. Even then it was our comfort to think of thy faithfulness and of thy loving-kindness to thy people.

9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Still following out this idea, he continues; "With all my heart have I longed for thee by night; in early morning have I sought thee; for when thy judgments are upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world *have learned* righteousness." So the Hebrew puts it—*have learned* in fact, as shown by past history. Of course he means to imply that this is right and ought always to be the effect of God's judgments upon the heart and experience of men. A moral lesson of inexpressible richness indeed!

10. Let favor be showed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

Yet while this is so with thy people who yield their heart to be taught of thee, it is not so with the rebellious, the wicked; for even when favors are shown him—not judgments but favors—he has not learned righteousness, not even in the land of uprightness, as when the wicked Chaldeans came into the land of Judah where God dwelt and had revealed his law, he dealt unjustly and oppressively even there and would not behold the majesty of the Lord, so often manifested in Israel's land.—There were also some wicked, hardened Jews to whom this language applied with painful truth.

11. LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: ~~but~~ they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

The first clause continues with the same thought; Even though thy hand be lifted on high, they will not see; "but they *shall* see," God will flash truth before their dull vision till they shall be compelled to see. They shall see and shall be confounded as they see by jealousy and wrath against the people. "Verily the fire of thine enemies," (that which is sent upon them) "shall devour them." I take the sense to be that they shall behold with the confusion of shame, not their own envy at the people but God's jealousy against the nations. My reasons are—(1.) That the Hebrew word for "envy" much more naturally and often means God's jealousy than man's envy. (2.) That the word for "ashamed" most naturally means shall be *confounded*, put to confusion, as when one's purposes are utterly baffled by superior wisdom and power; and (3.) Because the construction is in line with the thought in the context; while if we read "envy at the people," it is very difficult to see what envy he means, or against whom it is exercised.—The word used here for "people" can not well mean God's people, but does apply naturally to heathen nations.

12. LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

While destroying thine enemies with the fires of these judgments, thou wilt appoint peace (general prosperity) for us thy people, because thou hast wrought all our works *for* us; the sense here being "not *in* us" by an inward spiritual agency, but *for* us in the external agencies of thy providence. This construction is demanded by the Hebrew preposition which can not possibly mean *in* but must mean *for* us; and also by the context which relates to God's providential judgments and mercies.—

"Our works" mean, of course, the works wrought of God in our behalf, and not works of our own doing.

13. O LORD our God, *other* lords besides thee have had dominion over us; *but* by thee only will we make mention of thy name.

Exegetically, the point to be determined in this verse is whether the "other lords who have ruled us" are the king and people of Babylon, or idol gods:—the former with coercion; the latter with our own wicked consent. The tenor of this verse favors the reference to idols; the next equally favors the reference to the Chaldean power. The two ideas are closely related, and perhaps were not intended to be kept distinct.—In this verse we might closely render—Jehovah *our* God (as if renewing their consecration), lords other than thee *have been Baals* to us [the Hebrew word]; [henceforth] thee only will we celebrate.—It is a remarkable historic fact that the national propensity to idols utterly disappeared during that captivity. They came out from Babylon with the spirit of this verse infused most thoroughly into the national heart. It is therefore in accordance with the facts of history to give this sense to these words. Yet as already suggested the next verse seems to allude to their Chaldean lords. The fact was that the dominion of those Chaldean lords over the Jews was due wholly to their own previous voluntary submission to idol gods, so that the tyrannous sway of Chaldea was the natural fruit of their guilty subservience to Baal.

14. *They are* dead, they shall not live; *they are* deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.

Those lords shall rule us no more. "They are dead;" "they shall live no more" (shall have no resurrection from that death). "Ghosts of the dead are they, and shall not rise again:" "for this end" (*i. e.*, in order that they may never live again) "thou hast visited and destroyed them and made every memorial as to them perish." Such is the doom of their Chaldean masters, seen in prophetic vision as past.—It might also be said that *as to themselves*, their former idol gods had gone down to a grave from which there should be no resurrection.

15. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far *unto* all the ends of the earth.

But on the other hand thou hast not only preserved alive but hast greatly increased thine own people.—It is not entirely clear why the Jewish people are here called "the nation" a

term most commonly applied to a heathen nation. Perhaps however with reference to the remnant left in and near the land of Judah who were now vastly increased by the accession of their brethren returning from Babylon, but who had been in a heathenish state of apostasy from God. See Jeremiah's experience with them, chaps. 40-44.—The prophet repeats the cherished thought; thou hast increased thine own people, and in doing this hast *glorified thyself*. [The reflexive sense of this last verb is legitimate grammatically and much more forcible.] "Thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land," is the proper rendering of the clause which the English version makes "Thou hast removed it far *unto* all the ends of the earth." "It" and "unto" are here without authority, and the word for earth manifestly means [as often] the *land* inhabited by his people. The sense is not that God had removed the nation far away to the ends of the earth, but that he had moved back the borders of their land on every side to enlarge their territory. The new Zion is to be on a larger scale, filling far more territory. This enlargement (as is shown fully in many other prophecies) contemplates the addition not only of restored Jews but of converted Gentiles.

16. LORD, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening *was* upon them.

The song returns to the experiences of the people in their captivity. When thy chastening rod was upon them, they "visited thee;" they went to find and see God. They poured out the scarcely audible whisperings of their prayer: so the Hebrew means. So Hannah in her prayer at the temple "spake in her heart, only her lips moved; but her voice was not heard." (1 Sam. 1: 13.) Of such prayer perhaps Paul speaks as "groanings that can not be uttered." (Rom. 8: 26.)

17. Like as a woman with child, *that* draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, *and* crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.

18. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

The sad experience of the Jews during their captivity is the subject here, continued from v. 16. The general sense is clear. They suffered exceedingly, but to no purpose. Their pains as well as labor had been only abortive.—The last two clauses

of v. 18 seem to mean; We could not save the land; literally, "We could not make the land salvations," for, we could not work out salvation as to the land. The inhabitants of the land did not fall, *i. e.*, before us. We could not subdue them. The Jews could neither save their own land nor subdue their enemies.—A different construction, favored by Gesenius, supposes the last verb, "fall," in v. 18, to follow the general figure of childbirth which prevails through the greater part of these two verses. It also gives a corresponding sense to the same verb in another form of it which is translated "cast out," in the last clause of v. 19.—The objections to this construction are, (1.) That usage does not sustain this sense of the verb; (2.) That in v. 18 the figure is already dropped in the clause immediately preceding; "We have not wrought any deliverances," etc., and therefore should not be resumed; (3.) Another sense in v. 19 is better and should have the preference.

19. Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is *as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Here the tone changes from sorrow, failure, abortion, to life, prosperity and exultant joy. Those who chant this song are themselves *of Zion*, and speak for her as well as for themselves. "Thy dead, O Zion, shall live again." Thy people have been virtually, civilly, nationally dead; but they shall have a resurrection. "Being my dead body"—the dead of Zion—"they shall rise again." The choir speak here for the whole church in saying, It being my dead body, its resurrection is sure. Because these dead are God's people, members of his own Zion, their resurrection from this death is certain.—Then, thrilled with the blessed thought, the prophet gives utterance to the voice of God within him; "Awake and sing, ye that lie buried in dust; awake; come forth from your (figurative) graves, and break out in song as ye come up to the light of day and of this new life. For the dew that fell on thy dead body was like the dew of heaven upon vegetation—vivifying, restoring the withered and almost dying plants to life." The last clause will bear this appropriate and beautiful translation; "And on the earth, on the dead thou wilt make it fall." Naturally, the song turns to address Jehovah, who sends down the dew from the lower heavens, and much more his life-giving word of power to raise the dead.—This resurrection of God's people stands in contrast with the denial of resurrection to the wicked rulers of Babylon in v. 14. The latter nation went down to its political grave with no hope, no possibility of being raised to national

life again. On the contrary, God's people had been in a state of national death in Babylon; but God burst the bands of that death and called forth his people to a new life. They rise because they are God's people, and he can not let his Zion go down to rise no more. Their bodies, so to speak, had lain under the open sky of Babylon many long years; but God's dew upon them was like the dew which he sends on withering herbs. It breathed vitality into them and they rose again.

This passage proves beyond a question that the idea of a resurrection from the dead was familiar to the prophet and to his first readers for whose immediate use he wrote. Sensible writers never borrow figures from things unknown, but always from things better known than the fact they would illustrate. As no writer *could* draw a figure from what was unknown to himself, so, if he sought to teach, he *would* not draw one from what was unknown to his readers. As Isaiah could not talk about a resurrection if he had never known the idea and the words to express it, so he would not expect to be understood unless his readers were also familiar with it.

It becomes the more important to examine carefully into the question whether the Jews of Isaiah's time had any knowledge of a resurrection and a future life, because the affirmative has been gravely denied. A class of German critics, placing the Jews very low in regard to religious knowledge as well as civilization, have insisted that they knew nothing of a future life or a resurrection until they learned it from the Chaldeans during their captivity in Babylon. They argue that the motives by which Moses enforces the precepts of his system are never drawn from the future life but wholly from the present; and that these facts compel the conclusion that they knew nothing of a future life.

The just answer to this argument is that it entirely ignores the policy of God in the management of his moral government over men in the earlier ages of the race, viz., not to waste the force and power of the idea of a future life till men had learned to fear and believe God by his manifestations of himself before their eyes in this life. What could have been the use of talking to them about a future world before they had learned to believe his word and fear his wrath in this? It was therefore simply sound policy to withhold appeals to those stupendous facts of the future life until such judgments as the flood and the fires of God on Sodom and that long array of providential retributions on Egypt and Israel had reasonably fixed the idea in the human mind that *God reigns*—punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous.—And yet further it should be borne in mind that God governed the Hebrew people under a theocracy *which was to be administered by human hands*; hence its laws and penalties



must needs be such as human hands could wield. The same reasons existed then as now against making use of the penalties of the future world for the enforcement of civil law in this; the same also against any attempt on the part of civil rulers to legislate over the heart except as it may be developed in the external life. The genius of the ancient theocracy therefore adequately accounts for the omission of the great motives of the future life in the system of laws given through Moses.

But the patriarchs, and other good men of those times, undeniably had some knowledge of a future life. Jacob, supposing Joseph to be dead, said, "I will go down into the grave to my son mourning." (Gen. 3: 25.) In saying this he could not have thought of his body only as being brought into contact with Joseph's body in the grave, for he knew nothing of the place of Joseph's body. He expected to meet the real Joseph, the intelligent, immortal mind, in the world of spirits.—So when the patriarchs speak of being "gathered to their fathers" or "their people," *e. g.*, Gen. 25: 8, and 35: 29, and 49: 29–33.—In the sublime purpose of his life, "Moses had respect to the recompense of the reward," a phrase which in Paul's lips embraced a future life. (Heb. 11: 26.) To this same Moses the Lord said at the "bush," "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." (Ex. 3: 6–15, and 4: 5.) The bearing of this announcement upon the doctrine of a future life is interpreted for us on the highest authority. Jesus himself gives it thus: "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham,' " etc. *God is not the God of the dead but of the living.* That is, he can not be a God to non-existents, nonentities. If there were no future life, then the dead have ceased to exist; then there is no Abraham, no Isaac, no Jacob; and it is simply absurd to conceive of the Lord as being *their God*. In the view of our divine Lord, therefore, what God said to Moses at the bush assumed and implied a future life and the actual existence at that time of those patriarchs, then long since dead.—Coming down near to the times of Isaiah, what shall we say of the ascension of Elijah, a fact widely and well known in the age next preceding his? If it be assumed that those prophets and sons of the prophets in their schools of theology, had, up to that hour, no idea of a future life, how must that event have thrilled and fired their very souls! Was there no discussion over it among those youthful prospective prophets who sat at the feet of Elisha? Did they not ask some questions about it? And when Elisha himself raised the son of the Shumanite to life again, would not the idea be very likely to break in upon their minds, however dark before, that possible there is a future existence for souls after death, and perhaps a resurrec-



tion yet of all the dead? They must have been dull at thought if they did not think then about the future life and the resurrection from the dead.—It can scarcely be necessary to refer to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37: 1-12) where essentially the same use is made of the figure of a resurrection as appears here in Isaiah, viz., to represent the restoration of national life to a people politically dead. It may even be supposed that Ezekiel borrowed this from Isaiah, i. e., the fact of his being conversant with the figure in Isaiah might account for its use by the Spirit in his vision.—In Daniel 12: 2-3, the doctrine of the resurrection stands in its personal relations to individuals, good and bad, and is thought of precisely as bringing a glorious reward to the martyred righteous, but everlasting shame to the wicked. It were idle trifling to deny that this appeal to the resurrection involves a full knowledge of the stupendous fact and of its momentous bearings on eternal retribution.

This brief *expose* of this subject omits many important allusions to a future life, the final judgment, and eternal retribution, e. g., Job 19: 25-29. Ps. 16: 11, and 17: 15. Eccl. 12: 14. Isaiah 33: 14.

20. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

21. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

It would be unfortunate for the early readers of Isaiah to be so elated by these sublime views as to forget that there was yet more suffering to be borne, more chastisement to fall on the people of the Lord and more judgments, terrible in their severity, to fall on wicked Babylon, during which they would need a hiding place under the wing of their Redeemer. To meet this moral danger, the prophet kindly and beautifully subjoins as here: "Enter thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee," as Noah went into the ark and God shut him in. Hide thyself not *as it were* for a little moment, but "Hide thyself *for a little moment*," a short time only, till the storm of divine indignation shall have passed over. For the Lord cometh forth from his place, revealing himself in signal manifestations of retributive justice on guilty Babylon and all that vast world-wide empire. The earth will appear as a witness before his criminal court, disclosing the blood of murdered men, and covering the slain no

longer.—How ineffably grand and sublime is the conception of this august assize! Think of the witnesses, the slaughtered dead themselves appearing in court and their shed blood coming forth from the ground to bear its testimony against the guilty murderers.—And will not this Great God who so rules the elements of nature, find means to convict and punish all the guilty nations of all time?



## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE topics briefly introduced in the two closing verses of chap 26, are here resumed and made the subject of this chapter. On the one hand chastisements for God's people in moderation and in mercy, watched over with the tender care and compassion of a father's heart and designed only to reclaim and purify; and on the other, retributive judgments sent in stern but just severity on the incorrigible who will be nothing but enemies to God. The two processes are carried forward jointly in this description, the writer alternating from one to the other throughout the chapter for the purpose of comparing the discipline brought on God's people with the retributive judgments visited upon his persistent enemies.

1. In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

"In that day," when those things are done which are referred to in chap. 26: 20, 21.—"Leviathan," a sea serpent or other monster of the sea (Ps. 104: 26), sometimes the crocodile of Egypt (Job 40: 25) and the "dragon," are animals frequently named as symbols or figures to represent the great political powers that were specially hostile and oppressive to God's people. Leviathan appears in this character Ps. 74: 14, and the dragon in Ezek. 29: 3, and 32: 2, and Isaiah 51: 9. The name leviathan denotes an animal that coils itself like a serpent. Both, being at once formidable and loathsome, are fit emblems for a great persecuting oppressive power. There can be no doubt that they refer here to Babylon; possibly to Egypt also. Babylon we know is before the prophet's mind, and there is no special objection to supposing that both terms refer to the same enemy.—The Lord's sword is said to be "hard," of firm edge and well tem-

pered (not properly "sore") as well as "great" and "strong."  
 —The serpent is rather fleet or flying than "piercing." The sentiment is, the Lord will destroy Babylon as a power cruelly oppressive upon his people.

2. In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

As the first verse treats of the judgments that destroy Zion's enemies, this turns to the chastisements which God suffers to come on Zion herself.—The translation, "Sing unto her," needs to be materially modified.—(1.) Because this sense of the Hebrew verb here used can not be sustained, while the usual sense of the verb, viz., *afflict* is entirely legitimate here. Afflict her; let the strokes of chastisement fall upon her.—(2.) The idea of singing to her is entirely out of place in such a connection.—(3.) There is no other indication of singing; nothing else that speaks of a song; no mark to show where the song begins or ends, and nothing in the style or sentiment that is specially appropriate to a song. The verse should therefore be translated, putting the words in the order of the Hebrew, "In that day, a vineyard of wine [is Israel]; afflict her." My people being thought of under the figure of a vineyard for wine-culture, let the enemy bring calamities upon her. This language looks to the permissive agencies of God's providence which suffer affliction to fall on his people.

3. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

In this day of affliction upon his people, he is surely present to watch, keep, and guard them.—Keeping up the figure of the vineyard, the verse represents the Lord's constant, precious care that no real harm shall befall his vineyard. He truly loves his people. Never is this love more actively drawn out than while they are in the furnace of affliction; or according to this figure, than while foes are coming down upon his vineyard who may crush his vines to the earth, or burn them fatally.

4. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers *and* thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.

"Fury," the word commonly rendered "wrath," expresses what God is said to feel towards his enemies, but not what he feels toward his own people. This feeling as to them, he disclaims. "Burning wrath toward them is not in me. But O

that I had the briers and thorns for battle, *i. e.*, to fight against! I would come upon them [in strides like a giant], I would burn them up altogether." The Hebrew for "Who would set," etc., is usually and fitly rendered, "O that I had!"—Briers and thorns are of course the enemies of the vineyard, and as the figure implies, not only useless but pernicious, fit only to be assailed unsparingly and burnt up *en masse*.—In the application of this figure commentators have differed; some referring it to Babylon, the representative of external enemies used of God for the chastisement of his people; others, to sinners within the church, men whose influence is altogether pernicious. The former is more in harmony with the strain of the context which certainly makes Babylon, foreign enemies, and their destruction, very prominent, and which in a very distinct, emphatic manner runs the antithesis between exterminating judgments on such enemies and corrective discipline on God's people.—If it be urged on the other hand that v. 9 contemplates the cleansing of the church, the answer should admit it, yet should still insist that this cleansing refers to his true children, (turning them back from their ways of sin), and makes no special allusion to the destruction of corrupt members of the church as a part of the purifying process.

5. Or let him take hold of my strength, *that* he may make peace with me; *and* he shall make peace with me.

I would surely burn up those persecuting enemies of Zion unless they repent of their wickedness. If they would escape this doom, let them bow in submission, "make peace with me," and take hold of my strength for their salvation. The verse might be closely rendered, "or let him take hold of my strength; let him make peace with me; yea, let him make peace with me;" the repetition of the last clause being made for emphasis. The form of the verbs is the same throughout. The sentiment is that God holds the door open for his worst enemies to return to him in submission and penitence and thus take hold of his strength and turn it from destroying to saving. God's great power to save may be taken hold of and appropriated (so to speak) by every sinner when once he becomes humble, penitent and believing.

6. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

The use of the phrase "come of" in the English version to designate the posterity of Jacob is not admissible. The Hebrew word for "come" can not be joined so closely with "Jacob."

Its location in the sentence forbids it, and the phrase lacks also the necessary preposition, "come *out of*." The best construction supplies the word *days*, thus producing the somewhat common phrase, "In coming days" Jacob shall take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit." Keeping up still the figure of the vine, the Lord gives a precious promise of future enlargement and prosperity, such enlargement as will overspread the face of the world, such prosperity as will fill all the earth with the fruits of his vineyard. God's correction of his people in discipline, so far from defeating such results, ensures and hastens them.

7. Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? *or* is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?

This verse comes back to the great thought of the chapter viz., that God's smiting of his people is entirely a different thing from his smiting of their enemies. It is moderate in degree, and is not mortal in result. The question put here implies the strongest negation, and may be paraphrased thus;—"Does God smite his people with the smiting inflicted upon their smiters? Are his people slain of God with a slaughter like that of those who have sought to slay them? By no means."—Having made this general statement, the next two verses (8, 9) speak of God's correction of his people, and the two next following (10, 11) of his judgments upon their enemies.

8. In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.

Unfortunately, the English version very much obscures the sense of the original. Referring to God's chastisement of his people, "in measure" means *with care*, as it were with accurate measurement, inflicting not one pang too many, and not one too severe for its useful purpose.—"When it shooteth forth," should rather be read, "In sending her (*i. e.*, his people) *away*," [into exile in Babylon], the word being admirably taken out of the legal phrase for divorcing, putting away, an unfaithful wife.—"Thou wilt debate with it, *i. e.*, *plead* with her," this pleading being done not with words only or specially, but with real correction, which however the passage declares to be done by careful measure and never too severely. This verb, "plead" occurs somewhat frequently in this sense, the earnest rebuke of God's providence in the form of affliction and chastisement. See Ps. 103 : 9, and Isaiah 3 : 13.—The last clause should be read

not "he stayeth his rough wind," etc., but thus; "He removes [them from their country] with his strong wind in the east wind." The passage manifestly refers to God's removing his people into exile in Babylon, and conceives of it as done by a strong but transient wind. On a day when the east wind (specially terrible in that country) was blowing, God suffered them to be swept away into that distant land.

9. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

But this severe remedy proved efficacious. By this captivity the great sin of Jacob (idolatry) was washed away; and this was God's sole and whole intent (or purpose) to take away the sin of his people. To show how entirely their idol worship ceased and the very spirit of it as well, he says, "All the stones of their idol-altars became like lime-stones [slacked] "scattered," i. e., finely pulverized and no longer *stones* at all; "and their long worshiped images of Ashtaroth and Baal shall never rise again." —The facts of history have fully justified this strong prediction that the captivity in Babylon should effectually cure the nation of idolatry. Our passage shows this to have been the special purpose of God in this captivity. —So his purpose in all the afflictions sent upon his children is definitely to *purify*, to make the heart and life better; perhaps to eradicate some special form of sin, or, at least, to develop and push forward to maturity some precious Christian virtue. —Should not our wise and faithful Father be loved for this faithfulness and trusted to manage the process wisely? When God's people truly hunger and thirst after personal righteousness, appreciating heart-purity in some good degree at its real value, they will bless God with overflowing heart for the discipline he finds it wise and needful to inflict, grateful if by any means they may be made more like God, and so more acceptable in his sight.

10. Yet the defenced city *shall be* desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

11. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, *and* set them on fire; for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor.

These verses take up the case of God's enemies. The passage stands logically connected with v. 7, the intermediate verses (8, 9) having spoken of God's people. This begins, "*For*" (not "*yet*"), "*for*" (as if to develop more fully the fearful scourging of the wicked) "the strongly fortified city is made desolate." The city here thought of is Babylon, seen here forsaken, desolate and made like a wilderness; calves feeding and lying down there; browsing and cropping off all its foliage. Or by yet another figure, when the boughs are withered, they are broken off and then women (who in oriental life gathered the fuel) came and gathered them to burn—not precisely to set fire to where they lay, but to gather as fuel for household use.—Then dropping all figure, the Lord assigns the reason for such exterminating judgments. They will not consider and understand; will not learn God either through his mercies or his judgments; are therefore unteachable and incorrigible: hence God can show them no mercy. All efforts to enlighten them failing, no hope remains of their turning to God; and therefore destruction must be their doom.

12. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

13. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

This chapter, and indeed this entire prophetic message of four chapters, closes with a promise of the restoration of God's people from Babylon ["Assyria"] and from Egypt. All are to be gathered from the channel of the river (Euphrates) to the stream of Egypt. This latter is not here named the Nile. It is supposed to be the valley-stream anciently known as the Rhinocorura—this name being given it in the Septuagint, the translators of which version were familiar with Egypt.—The expression "shall beat off," gives us the figure of beating off olives from their tree. So the Lord will carefully gather up his people scattered in their captivity. It is not precisely "gathered *one by one*," but rather *one to one*; i. e., one to another; brought together from their dispersions.—The blowing of the Lord's great trumpet is the signal for this assembling of the outcast and almost perishing exiles. Restored, they worship the Lord (as their fathers did) in the holy mount at Jerusalem.—This was definitely fulfilled under Zerubbabel and Ezra. It closed the scene of the great captivity at Babylon.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS chapter having no special connection with the preceding, opens with a woe on Samaria, a proud city, with its sensual and drunken population, vs. 1-4, then turns to speak of the "residue of the Lord's people," first in promise, vs. 5, 6; then in rebuke for their sins, specifying their obduracy of heart and scornful rejection of God's messages of warning and instruction, vs. 7-15; followed with the consequences, viz., judgments from God to their destruction, vs. 16-22. The chapter closes with illustrations drawn from the varied but wisely planned processes of agriculture, vs. 23-29.

1. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

In denouncing a woe from God upon Samaria, the prophet describes at once its natural beauty and its moral ugliness; the sublimity and grandeur of what nature had done for the city, and the monstrous deformity which vile man had wrought into her social and moral life. The sense of the original I would express thus: "Woe to the lofty crown of the drunkards of Ephraim and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valleys of the wine-smitten." —This "lofty crown" is the city, Samaria; the "head of the fat valley" is the magnificent hill on which the city was built. Of course the drunkards are the people themselves. This description gives a strong view of the natural beauty of the site, yet both ancient historians and modern travelers endorse this view most fully. In Smith's Bible Dictionary the locality is described thus: "In the territory originally belonging to the tribe of Joseph, about six miles north-west of Shechem, there is a wide basin-shaped valley, encircled with high hills, almost on the edge of the great plain which borders upon the Mediterranean. In the center of this basin which is on a lower level than



the valley of Shechem, rises a less elevated oblong hill with steep yet accessible sides, and a long, flat top. This hill was chosen by Omri as the site of the capital of the kingdom of Israel." See 1 Kings 16: 24. Dr. Robinson comments on this passage; "The site of this capital was therefore a chosen one, and it would be difficult to find in all Palestine a situation of equal strength, fertility, and beauty combined. In all these particulars, it has very greatly the advantage over Jerusalem." Bib. Res. 3: 146.—Here we have in prophecy the doom of this beautiful but morally corrupt and guilty city.—The precise date of the prophecy is not given. Probably it dates not very long before the event. The city fell in the sixth year of Hezekiah.—The main object of the prophet here is not so much to detail the facts in reference to its destruction as to make the case a moral lesson to the people of his own kingdom, Judah.

2. Behold, the LORD hath a mighty and strong one, *which* as a tempest of hail *and* a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

When the Lord would destroy, he never lacks a destroyer for the work. This verse describes him as coming upon Samaria. "The Lord hath a mighty and strong one who, like a hail-storm, a destructive tempest, a storm of mighty waters overflowing—shall cast down it" (this city) "to the earth with the hand." This agent was Shalmanezar, king of Assyria, whose siege of three years terminated about B. C. 721 in the capture and destruction of the city and the utter fall of the kingdom. He prostrates and ruins this magnificent city as a fearful hail-storm would first crush to the earth and then with its sudden flood of waters, wash its very ruins away into the valleys beneath. So goes down the pride of this gorgeous but wicked, drunken city!

3. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

This verse reiterates the idea that a city so proud and so vile in its sensuality should be trodden under foot. It is cast down by the conqueror's hand (v. 2) and then trodden under his feet.

4. And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, *and* as the hasty fruit before the summer; which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

The original is better expressed thus; "And the fading flower of his glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valleys shall be as the figs ripe ere it is yet summer, which when one

sees, while yet in his hand he greedily devours."—In Palestine the early fig ripens in June, while the main harvest of figs is from August to November. Hence these first ripe fruits are snatched greedily; no one thinks of laying them by for future use. As soon as he sees them and has them in hand, he swallows them down. So the conqueror of Samaria would seize upon its spoil and make an end of its gorgeous beauty and vain pride. Ah, how short-lived are all the glories of nature and art when brought under Jehovah's curse by the moral corruption of men!

5. In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.

6. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

"The residue of his people" after the kingdom of the ten tribes is destroyed, must be composed mainly of the kingdom of Judah, including perhaps some who escaped from the northern kingdom, casting in their lot with Judah through their common sympathy with the God of their fathers.—The reader will notice how pertinently this language alludes to the previous verses. The beautiful city of Samaria had been the pride and boast of its citizens. God would be a richer crown of glory, a diadem of beauty more to be desired, to all the remnant of his people. And moreover he would be not a spirit of vanity and drunkenness such as cursed the people of Samaria, but a spirit of judgment [wisdom and justice] to those who sit as judges, and a spirit of strength [valor and prowess] to those who drive back their foes to the cities and gates of their own land, carrying the war away from their own invaded country to the land and the very city walls of their enemies.—The Hebrew word rendered "turn" is really "*turn back*," force back the enemy to his own gates.

7. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

8. For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

But even this remnant, spared when Ephraim fell, are fearfully poisoned with the same sins—the same sensuality, drunk-

eness and consequent blundering in their social and civil life. All goes wrong under the influence of strong drink. As a man intoxicated can not walk a straight line, so neither can the drunkard think right as to truth or duty, or judge right in matters of law and equity.—The “priest” and the “prophet” are referred to as the classes which legitimately should have the leading influence, the men through whom God was wont to speak while they walked humbly with him, and to whom the people naturally looked up for authority in the ways of life. Micah (chap 3: 11) classes them together as mutually corrupt, and Jeremiah (5: 31) shows how they played into each other’s hands in their schemes of wickedness. That even these men, the nominal prophets and priests of Judah, should reel and stagger through wine; blunder and err themselves and mislead others through strong drink, that their shameless intoxication should foul their very tables so as to leave no place undefiled: this is truly a dark picture! It must be that in those days wine-drinking made men drunk. Here is a plain case; this wine-making country is terribly cursed with its own domestic wines. Whether those wines were *enforced*, and if so, by what means, or how much, the prophet does not tell us; but he leaves us to infer that in the absence of the fear of God and under a very low sense of moral responsibility to withstand the temptation, even the chief men of the land, the magistrates and the religious teachers of the people, became horribly debased even to the most beastly excesses, and to the utter subversion of law, social order and religion. The mischief did not end here. The people and their leaders had not only become horribly corrupt; they were also hardened against reform. They had paralyzed their moral sensibilities till their hearts were like adamant against the warning messages of their God. Of this the prophet proceeds to speak.

9. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*

10. For precept *must be* upon precept; precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little *and* there a little:

This verse opens abruptly. Critics have been perplexed, not without cause, in their attempt to trace the course of thought. On the whole, I approve the construction which makes these the words of the people—sensual, apostate, hardened, and disposed (as such men naturally are) to condemn the rebukes of God against their sins. Their thought may be put thus; *whom* does God think to teach knowledge? Does he propose to teach *us*, as if we needed such knowledge? As if *we* cared for such in-

struction! Does he take us for little children just weaned from their mother's milk? His manner looks like that; duty, duty; line, line; as if he were teaching children their alphabet. Such instruction might be well enough for them; but how insulting to our dignity that God should send such messages to *us*! Precept after precept; line upon line; a word here, a word there; pressed upon us at every point; thrust in our faces day and night. Shall we never be free from this perpetual annoyance?

In favor of this construction it may fitly be said that it corresponds, (1.) With the words of the original; (2.) With the entire scope of the context as we shall see; (3.) With the spirit of men in every age when morally poisoned with sensuality and intoxication.—There can therefore be no valid objection to this construction. No other has these points in its favor in nearly an equal degree.—A slight modification might be admissible, viz., to put these words in the mouth of the prophet himself, thus: Where can the Lord find a man willing to be taught? Among all this debauched people, whom can one make to understand doctrine? None certainly but the very young children. They are not yet morally poisoned. To all others the word of God has become unbearably irksome, their complaint being that it comes to them line upon line, in perpetual annoyance.—This modified construction makes the transition to the next verse more easy, the prophet himself saying, "Therefore, with stammering lips [of a foreign nation and language] will God speak to this people." Another construction, adopted by the early commentators, assumed that this drunken people had simply become demented—vitiated in understanding; so that the Lord through his prophets was compelled to address them as mere children and adapt his instructions accordingly. But this does not correspond with the laws of human depravity so well as the other, nor with the allusion in the context to "scornful men" (v. 14).

11. For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

In these words God threatens them with exile among a people of unknown tongue, viz., the Assyrians. Through those lips, stammering with unintelligible speech, will God speak to this scornful, besotted people. Inasmuch as the words rendered "stammering lips," were used both for the unmeaning jargon of an unknown tongue, and also for a scoffing, derisive imitation of others' speech, designed to take off contemptuously what is said in earnest, it is at least supposable that these words retort upon the wicked Jews, thus; "Since you insultingly mock the Lord's prophets by repeating their words in a sneering way, God

will let you hear the stammering words of an unknown tongue, yourselves captive in a foreign land."

12. To whom he said, This is the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

It enhanced their guilt that God had kindly promised them rest and refreshing, the best of blessings, but they would not hear. Omitting the words in italics, we may translate thus; "These are the men to whom God had said: This is the rest; give rest to the weary; this is the refreshing: but they would not hear." The Lord had plainly indicated that simple obedience to himself, right-doing, would ensure them rest and peace. He had exhorted them to lead all the people in this good way. They would neither walk in it themselves, nor lead others.

13. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The first part of this verse refers to the method in which God had taught them;—*i. e.*, in successive yet brief messages, pressed assiduously. The latter part gives the results. Since they would not hear, their end was *ruin*. The terms used to describe it correspond to those in chap. 24: 17, 18, the figures being, a stone to stumble over and thus fall and be broken, and a pit to fall into.—It is important to fix the precise thought expressed by the word "*that*" in the clause "the word of the Lord was unto them line upon line, '*that*' they might fall backward," etc. The original often means *in order that*—in this case as if with the expectation of this result as a righteous judgment from God upon them. They deserved these judgments for their scornful abuse of God's warnings. He had persisted long in this course of warning to the end that, if they would not hear, it should make their guilt the more palpable and their punishment the more impressive and morally useful to mankind. As exemplary punishments are sometimes demanded to sustain the majesty of law, so are they also to sustain the reverence and honor due to the mission of God's truth and spirit. In each case and for both reasons scornful men must have a fearful doom.

14. Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not

come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.

These scornful men must be the sensual, debased, drunken priests and prophets who were before us in vs. 7, 8; who also scoffed at and repelled the assiduous labors of the true prophets in vs. 9, 10. That they are here plainly called "scornful men" confirms the view already taken of their character. Though spoken of as "ruling this people in Jerusalem," we must include in the class not only the princes but the priests and false prophets, since in v. 7 the latter are named in the same connection. They were all men of commanding influence. V. 15 brings out their spirit in plain terms. We need not suppose that they themselves used language quite so plain and truth-telling as this. Wicked men rarely put all their real thoughts into such very plain words; much less do they put the real facts of their case so plainly, since commonly they shrink from even seeing them so truthfully in all their relations to God and to themselves. But this language states the simple truth. Sinners *act* as if they had made a covenant with death [not to harm them] and were at agreement [by a mutual understanding] with hell. This last word is nearly synonomous here with death, including all they thought of as to be feared from the displeasure of God. Hence when God's overflowing scourge (threatened against Ephraim (v. 2) and virtually against themselves) should sweep over the land, it should not touch them; for they had made lies their refuge and had hidden themselves under their delusions!—How ineffably strange! Could any thing illustrate more forcibly the sheer madness of sin; its power to infatuate and blind and dement the human mind! And yet there are thousands who reach such a degree of moral blindness as virtually to deny that sin, moral obligation, God's law and penalty—are realities. Hence having assumed that these things have no existence except in men's frightened imaginations, they have only to discard all fear and all is well (so they think), because there is no reality to be feared.—If it be asked *how* intelligent men can reach such hardihood of skepticism in defiance of their own reason, conscience and experience, the answer is simply, *under the power of sin*. They love sinning; they have chosen it as their portion, and hence they *must* make lies their refuge. They are driven into falsehood as their only relief from the perpetual goadings of conscience. Errors and delusions become welcome to wicked men as a necessity of their moral nature and sinful state. They can have no peace without the help of lies and delusions. The passage before us puts these great moral facts in the philosophy of sinning, in a light at once bold, clear, and terribly truthful!

16. Therefore thus saith the LORD God, Behold, I lay

in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

The course of thought here is admirable. The stone which wicked men stumble over and the lies under which they hide for refuge combine to suggest the better things which God provides for those who love and obey him. He will lay in Zion a stone, far other than that—a far more sure foundation, tried, proved and precious; whoever believeth shall not have occasion to flee in haste and perturbation.—Beyond a doubt this corner and foundation stone is the Messiah, the sinner's real friend and refuge. So Peter believed and taught; 1 Peter 2: 6–8.—There is special pertinence in specifying *those who believe* as blessed in the Savior. They are contrasted with the skeptical who make lies their refuge. There must always be essential skepticism underlying those bold, scornful attitudes of sinning mind.—“Foundation stones” are seen to be an admirable figure for the great solidity and the eternal safety of this “rock of ages,” when we recur to the building usages of that country as evinced at this day by the perfectly enormous blocks of stone which appear in the ruins of the structures of that and of earlier ages.

17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

Another thing God will do also. He will institute a process of simple and stern *justice* toward those guilty sinners who will not have salvation in his Son. The first clause does not mean that God will apply his measuring line to justice in the abstract, but that he will measure out and award to each sinner his doom in strict justice. He will use justice for his measuring line and judgment for his plumb line. The figure of a builder is still before the mind from the verse previous.—The last clause portends those visitations of divine justice which shall tear down and sweep away the refuges of the guilty. It shall avail them nothing that they think themselves securely sheltered. What will they do when the shelter itself shall be swept away in the dreadful storm!

18. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.



19. From the time it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.

“Trodden down by it” partially changes the figure and conceives of the “scourge” as an *army* trampling them under foot. —The first word in v. 19 may mean *as often as* it sweeps along, it shall bear you away. Every surge of this terribly devastating flood shall take effect. —The last clause has been interpreted variously. The English version favors this sense—that the mere hearing of the rumor of such judgments would fill them with consternation, or that the rumor would bring unmitigated consternation. But it is doubtful whether the translation, “*report*,” does not mislead us. The original words rendered, “understand the report,” are precisely the same which occur in v. 9, there translated, “understand doctrine.” It is therefore probable that these words refer to those. On this supposition the meaning will be that only [nothing short of] the consternation of such an experience will make these hardened sinners understand the truth of God’s threatenings. God sought patiently, and with assiduity long unwearied, to impress a just sense of these truths upon their minds. Every other means failing, he comes at length to these appalling judgments as his last resort.

20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself *on it*: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

Bed and covering are thought of as means for hiding one’s self, as in v. 15. The bed is too short, the covering too narrow, the hiding place will prove entirely inadequate. These expressions are proverbial.

21. For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as *in* the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.

The course of argument expressed by “*for*” v. 20 and also by “*for*” v. 21, is this. Judgments from God will overwhelm you, for two reasons: (1.) “*For*” (v. 20) your refuge will avail you nothing; (2.) “*For*” (v. 21) God will arise in glorious majesty to do an appalling, almost unparalleled work of destruction. It is compared to his double overthrow of the Philistines before David (see 2 Sam. 5: 17–25, and 1 Chron. 14: 9–16), expressed thus: “The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies



as the breaking forth of waters." Again "they came up against him and he smote them," effectually breaking their power.—"Strange" is here in the sense of peculiar, extraordinary, wonderful. The passage affords no countenance to the idea that justice is abhorrent or even distasteful to the mind of God, while mercy and mercy only is congenial. The truth is that the administration of justice, where the occasion demands it, is perfectly in harmony with God's character. He could not possibly do otherwise however much he may regret the necessity of inflicting just punishment.

22. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

The word "bands" might in itself bear either of two senses; (1.) The power of sin to reproduce itself and beget more sinning, thus riveting the bands of sin upon the miserable victim, as each successive dram binds the inebriate with new bands; or (2.) The bands of a captive yoke, holding a nation down in galling bondage. The latter is the more common meaning of the Hebrew word. See chaps. 52: 2, and Jer. 27: 2. This also corresponds better here with the reason assigned; "For I have heard that the Lord has determined to bring a wide spreading judgment upon the wicked over all the land."—Therefore, as the conclusion of this argument, do not scoff, I beseech you; do not impiously and daringly insult the great God lest he will rivet your bands of captivity, never to be sundered again.—The clause, "a consumption" [or destruction] "even determined," occurs in Isaiah 10: 23.

23. Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

24. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground?

25. When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place?

26. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.

These lessons drawn from the processes of agriculture are in two parts; the first (vs. 24–26) represents that the husbandman does not plow and harrow all the year, forever, as his only busi-

ness, and without reference to seed-sowing and harvests. On the contrary he always has his eye on the outcome, and shapes his plowing to his desired results. God teaches him to do so: hence God must have wisdom sufficient to order his own processes of breaking up human hearts by discipline and judgment—processes somewhat analogous to the work of the plow and the harrow. See Hos. 10: 11-13.

27. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.

28. Bread *corn* is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it *with* the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it *with* his horsemen.

29. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, *which* is wonderful in counsel, *and* excellent in working.

The second part of the comparison is of the same general character. The husbandman threshes out his seed with instruments adapted to the grains in hand. The very fine seeds and stalks of the fitches and cummin (both garden vegetables used as condiments) he does not grind to atoms by driving over them his huge threshing wain. But he does use this heavy instrument in threshing his wheat [bread-corn], but he does not thresh this forever. There is a limit to the bruising which is useful for either the grain or the straw.—As this huge threshing wain is often a symbol for stern and crushing afflictions, it must obviously be so applied here. God chastens in wisdom, evermore adapting his agencies to the case in hand. In the severest inflictions of his rod he goes the length of wisdom; no further. Therefore “be ye not mockers” lest ye compel the Almighty to make your punishment indefinitely more rigorous and crushing. Remember, God seeks your reformation, and shapes his discipline to your case. Therefore do not compel him to a degree of rigor which can be only painful to him; only ruinous to yourself. God gives the husbandman the needful wisdom to adapt his means to his ends. Has he not wisdom in reserve to regulate his own inflictions of suffering upon men in this world of moral trial?—Another turn has been given to this illustration, thus: “Can not ye, wise men, apply to your conduct toward God that shrewdness and wisdom which the farmer displays, and which God has given alike to him and to you?”

## CHAPTER XXIX.

UNDER the name "Ariel," the city of Jerusalem is besieged and sorely pressed (vs. 1-4), but delivered with signal manifestations of Jehovah's power in the utter discomfiture and dispersion of her hosts of enemies (vs. 5-8). Then abruptly, the Jews ["this people"] are before us, morally blinded, spiritually intoxicated; having revelations of God's will but strangely disregarding and ignoring them; for which sins the woes of God are denounced upon them (vs. 9-16). Then the light of gracious promise breaks forth upon this darkness, and the chapter closes with predictions of sight restored to the blind; of joy in God to the meek and the poor in spirit, with the suppression of various forms of wickedness, and the assured confidence and joy of Jacob (vs. 17-24).

Interpreters have differed widely in their efforts to apply the first section (vs. 1-9) to some particular siege of Jerusalem, some of them referring the description to a supposed siege by Sennacherib; others to that by Nebuchednezzar; and yet others to that by the Romans. Practically it has been found impossible to make all the points given here meet in any one of these known historic sieges. The supposition of a siege by Sennacherib lacks historic support. The Assyrians under Esar-haddon may have besieged the city during Manasseh's reign; but if so, not a solitary special circumstance of it is known. Hence some judicious commentators regard the first part as an ideal siege, the elements of which may be drawn from any or all of the actual sieges ever suffered by the city, the passage being designed as an illustration of the fortunes of Jerusalem considered as the church and people of God, primarily of the Jewish economy; ultimately of the Christian as well. This view is ably presented by Dr. Alexander, and seems to me to remove satisfactorily the obstacles which embarrass, not to say forestall every other construction; and also to bring out pertinently the great prophetic truths in respect to the unbelief and blindness of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the ultimate restoration of Israel.—This view of vs. 1-8 derives some support from the fact that Zechariah (chap. 12: 1-9) has a similar ideal siege of Jerusalem and invasion of Judah, figuratively representing the church militant, assailed by her enemies. Ezekiel also (chaps. 38 and 39) represents a grand onset upon the land of Israel in the same general and

ideal sense. This method of representation is therefore not foreign to the genius of prophetic conception. Jerusalem, the city of God, standing for the capital of his spiritual kingdom on earth; besieged violently, but rescued from ruin and her assailants scattered like chaff because she is God's altar; yet when in the character of God's visible church, she becomes spiritually blind, bigoted and hardened, God will marvelously scourge and judicially abandon her, taking away her prerogatives and giving them to others, *i. e.*, taking them away from the blinded Jew to give them to the Gentile. For the prophecy in its application contemplates not a supposed but a real case, lifting the curtain of the future and looking directly into that marvelous change by which the kingdom of God was taken from the unfruitful Jews and given to the fruit-bearing Gentiles, in the opening of the Christian age. Such is manifestly the scope of this chapter.

1. Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.

"The city where David dwelt" is of course Jerusalem. Consequently "Ariel" means Jerusalem, but the reason why it is called Ariel has been given variously. The Hebrew word admits of two distinct etymologies; either *the lion of God*, in the sense of a city of heroes; or *the altar of God*, meaning the place distinguished as the location of the altar and the sacrificial worship of God's people. Gesenius decides for the former, sustaining that construction by a case of similar usage in 2 Sam. 23 : 20, and 1 Chron. 11 : 22, rendered, "two lion-like men of Moab" [Ariels]. But the other construction, *altar of God*, has also its support in Ezek. 43 : 15, 16, where the same word is applied to the altar of burnt-offering. The allusion in this verse to sacrifices seems to me to favor the sense *altar of God*. The point is of no very special importance.—"Add year upon year," let the festivals revolve, *i. e.*, go and come, as the revolving year brings round their times. The idea seems to be, go on in your accustomed routine of festivals and religious observances; alas! that all this should be only a dead form! It can not save you from siege and peril.

2. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.

Despite of your formal sacrifices, I will cause your city to be closely besieged. The word rendered "distress" means to *press severely by siege*. The last clause is a promise that through divine aid, the city will endure the pressure and come off victorious. This sense turns upon the significance of the name Ariel, and might come from either view of its meaning; lion of

God, or altar of God ; thus : Yet as to me this city shall be as a lion of God—resistless, never to be subdued ; or in this way : It shall be as the altar of God—sacred in my regard as the place devoted to my worship, and therefore saved through my gracious interposition ; or, as some suggest, thus : Like an altar on which fires may burn, but the altar live and come forth unharmed.

3. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.

The description of her calamity continues through vs. 3, 4. If the closing words of v. 2 are promise, this verse will begin better with “*yet*,” thus : Yet, before deliverance comes, thou must needs be brought very low.—The remarkable thing to be noticed in this verse is the prominence given to the agency of God. He says I will do this : “I will encamp against thee ;” “will build forts,” etc. What God does by others, he is often said to do himself. It was of his purpose that foreign enemies distressed his sinning people, and for their good.—Some take this remarkable prominence of God’s hand as an indication that the siege is only ideal ; not real. It is at least plain that the prophet would turn the eye of the people to God’s agency as special.

4. And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

The prostrate condition of the city is here presented under two figures ; 1. That of a man fallen to the ground, too weak to rise, and able to speak only in low whispers, perhaps near death ; and 2. Speaking with a low under tone like the ventriloquists who pretend to have communion with the spirits of the dead. This too is supposed to result from the weakness and prostration of the city. She can not speak above her breath, and therefore her utterances remind one of the ventriloquists.

5. Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff that passeth away : yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.

This is promise. “Thy strangers” are the foreign armies that have besieged her. They become like fine dust and like

chaff driven before the tempest—terribly significant figures to denote the ease, rapidity and entireness of their destruction.—Instead of “Moreover” to express this transition from v. 4 to v. 5 we might read, “And yet,” weak and low as thou hast been brought, thy enemies shall be utterly put to flight. The extreme weakness of the city shows that this victory is not of her achieving, but is of God alone.

6. Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

“Thou,” is not the city. Neither the gender of the verb nor the course of thought permit this construction. It is the enemy—the “multitude of strangers” who had invested her in siege.—“Visited,” i. e., with the judgments of the Almighty—thunder, earthquake—a fearful group of the most terrific and destructive agencies in the material world.

7. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.

8. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

The phenomena of dreams admits in this case of a twofold application; (1.) to the experience of the Jews; (2.) to the experiences of their enemies. As all the scenes and excited fears of a dream may suddenly disappear when one awakes, so the Jews will be suddenly relieved as from a nightmare of horrors, by awaking some morning to find that God's tempest and fire have scattered their enemies like fine dust and chaff.—Then on the other hand, their enemies who in their confidence of success had been dreaming of pillage and plunder, awake to find their souls no less hungry and thirsty than before. This is a phase of the phenomena of dreaming, quite distinct from the former. It supposes a man to be hungry and to dream of eating; thirsty, and to dream of drinking; yet he awakes to find that his dream is only a tantalizing delusion. So with the fond but vain hopes of the besiegers. Both of these illustrations from dreams are true to nature. Mr. Barnes quotes from the Journal of Mungo Park, ready to perish from thirst in the deserts of Africa: “No

sooner had I shut my eyes than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land. There as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa."

9. Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

10. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

Here commences the second part of this chapter—the analogous description of the spiritual blindness and guilt of the people and their consequent rejection of God.—V. 9 is sufficiently obscure in the original, and even worse in the English version. The Jews are *spoken to*, addressed, in the first part of the verse; but *spoken of* in the second part. It were vain to attempt to reproduce in our language precisely the paronomasia or correspondence in sound of the two pairs of imperative verbs which stand in the first half of the verse. Alexander succeeds well in the first pair; "Waver and wonder!"—the sense being, Delay; never come to any decision to do your duty; and you shall have occasion to be *amazed* at the fearful result. The meaning of the next pair is, Revel in sensual pleasure; you shall become spiritually blind thereby.—The manner of presenting such truths by imperative verbs is this: Go on in your sins; you will reap what you sow. The prophet describes their sins by (apparently) commanding them to do those sins. Yet the simple thought is, *If* you will sin, you must suffer.—The last part of the verse falls back to the usual form of plain description. They are spiritually drunken, morally infatuated in a sort of drunkenness which comes on men, not through wine, but through the madness of sin. They stagger, *i. e.*, reel in judgment and in life, yet not through strong drink, but through the moral blindness and infatuation which sin begets. And this (v. 10 proceeds to say) is of the Lord in righteous judgment upon the people for their abuse of light enjoyed. It is the deep sleep of dead insensibility as to moral relations and duties—the eyes being shut as if utterly blind to moral truth. "The prophets and your rulers" (better, your "heads," *i. e.*, head-men, leaders in public sentiment) "hath he covered, *i. e.*, as to the eyes, so that they see not the plain truths of God.—Remarkably this very state of moral blindness appeared in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees among whom Christ lived. They seemed utterly incapable either of

just moral sentiments or of a clear intellectual view of moral truth. God had left them to moral blindness. This fact accords with and illustrates the main point of this prophecy.—The same great feature in God's moral administration appears in chap. 6 : 9, 10, and in the quotations of that passage in the New Testament ; also in Rom. 1 : 24, 26, 28, and 2 Thess. 2 : 11, 12. It is an awful fact and should admonish sinners to beware how they resist the Holy Ghost and abuse the appeals of divine mercy. These visitations of judicial blindness from God are exemplary, for a warning to others, God's purpose being to heighten the moral power of his truth and spirit on human hearts and thus to augment the force of his agencies for the salvation of sinners. It surely behooves men therefore not to counteract God's benevolent purposes and endeavors.—Blindness of mind seems to follow persistent sinning by a natural law of our being. If men will sin they must for their own comfort and quiet love darkness rather than light. Loving darkness, they unconsciously become blind. - Not using their moral eyes, they seem to lose the power to use them. The intellect itself becomes strangely distorted, seeing things that are not as though they were, and not seeing things that are really in themselves the plainest truths ever revealed to man.—This blindness is progressive. Through divine mercy, it is not usually total in this world, so that still there is hope and an open door of salvation for the most hardened and blinded. But the facts which appear under this law of persistent sinning are startling, and ought to alarm and arouse every sinner to avoid so dire a curse. As to God's agency in the operation of this law, it must sustain the same relation to it as to those physical laws of our being under which disease follows gluttony and alcohol burns up the living tissues. Who can blame our Creator for constituting both our body and mind to exist and act under laws adapted to our moral relations and responsibilities, so that we must voluntarily determine our own well or ill being?

11. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I can not; for it is sealed.

12. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

All revelations of God's will to men fall through and become inoperative and dead, in ways analogous to the cases supposed here. A sealed book is handed to a man who knows how to read with request that he read it, but he says, "I can not, for it



is sealed." Then it is handed (unsealed perhaps) to one who has never learned to read, and he can not read because he does not know how. This is the sense of v. 12 where "not learned" means only, "I do not know book," *i. e.*; do not know how to read a book. Thus the import of these verses is that in one way or another, God's revelations avail the people nothing. Their moral blindness precludes the practical utility of God's revelations, just as the sealing of the book in one case and ignorance of the art of reading in the other makes this supposed book of no account.

13. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, *even* a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.

These statements are plain. The people are formal, hypocritical and heartless. Their fear of God is a thing of precept, not of heart; a thing taught but not felt; taught, but not accepted and inwrought into the moral and spiritual life. Therefore God will do a very marvelous thing; he will let the wisdom of their wise men perish. Moral blindness will hide the light of moral truth from their eyes.—Our Lord cites this passage (Matt. 15 : 7-9) as applying fitly to the perversions of the law by the Pharisees through their traditions. This was perverting, *i. e.*, wresting and distorting the very substance as well as the letter of the law. In the days of Isaiah, men may have held the truth unchanged as to its form of expression, yet blunted and made morally inoperative through their perverseness. The prophecy may be fulfilled in either way. Probably our Lord quotes this passage in full accordance with its original meaning. Isaiah's prophetic eye is on that period of national blindness and infatuation in which the people rejected their own Messiah, and so plucked down ruin upon their city and nation.

15. Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

The phrase, "Seek deep to hide," is somewhat in imitation of the Hebrew. There may be a slight touch of irony in the

idea of their being profound and deep enough to devise plans which God could not fathom. This is one of the manifestations of moral blindness. How short-sighted men must be to suppose themselves too shrewd for the Omniscient God, and their schemes too deep for him to see through !

16. Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay : for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

In the English version, the first clause fails to give the full sense of the original since it does not show in what respect "your turning of things upside down" is like the potter's clay, nor indeed does it bring out any intelligible sense.—The prophet compares the moral perverseness of men who think their plans too deep for God to comprehend, to the absurdity of the notion that the potter is only *as* his clay, or to the impudence that would be manifested if any thing made could and should say to the maker of it, "He never made me!" or if any thing produced should say as to him that produced it, "He knows nothing!"—The first Hebrew word may best be taken as an exclamation, "Your perverseness!" Alas, what perverseness is this of yours!—In what follows, we may either translate with Dr. Alexander: "Is the potter to be reckoned as the clay [and nothing more] that the thing made should say of its maker, he made me not, and the thing formed, say of its former, he does not understand?" Or thus: "Oh, your perverseness! *If* the potter should be reputed only as the clay! [How monstrous!] *For* [so] the thing formed would say to its former, he never made me; and the thing produced would say to its producer, he knows nothing!"—This last construction gives the usual sense to the Hebrew words rendered "*if*" and "*for*;" (which are the pivot words of the passage) and moreover assumes that the expressions are abrupt and elliptical, as a good man would naturally speak when astounded and horrified by such monstrous absurdity and impiety as this. For these reasons I prefer this to any other construction.

17. *Is* it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?

Here commences the transition from the moral blindness of the Jews and their perversion of all right ideas, to promises of glorious change. Great changes in the natural world are the figures which represent the analogous changes to be wrought in the spiritual state of Zion. Lebanon, by nature a perpetual forest,

becomes a cultivated, fruitful field; but on the other hand, the fruitful field comes to be reputed as a forest. The interrogative form of the sentence, implying the strongest affirmative, asserts that this change will take place soon. The forests of ages, the Lebanon of this figure, represent the Gentile nations, long shut off from moral culture, and bearing no fruit unto God. But they become the fruit-bearing fields—the Carmel of gospel times!—Over against this, the old fruit-bearing fields—the Jewish people—go back by reason of their unbelief to the state of a forest, under no moral culture and yielding no gospel fruit. As our Lord often expressed it: “Many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.” (Matt. 19: 30.) “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” (Matt. 21: 43.)—The Hebrew word here used for “fruitful field” is “Carmel,” which in itself might be either a common noun, meaning fruitful field, or a proper name for the well known mountain in Northern Palestine, often put in antithesis with Lebanon, a forest, this mountain being cultivated and verdant even to its summit. In the present case, the article prefixed shows that the mountain is not referred to.—It is supposable that this turning of a forest to a fruitful field and *vice versa*, may have been suggested by the more strange turning [of moral ideas upside down] of which the Jews had been just before convicted. As if the prophet would say, Since you reason so preposterously and subvert all right views of God and of yourselves, God will reverse the entire religious state of the world, casting you out of his church and taking the Gentiles in, turning your moral fields which God has been cultivating for ages into a wilderness, and opening new [Gentile] fields for spiritual culture where all up to this hour has been a desert.

18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

19. The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

The expressions here allude to vs. 11, 12, and aim to put in antithesis the moral blindness of the Jews as predicted there, and the docility and consequent joy in God and in his gospel among the Gentile converts. The history of the Acts of the Apostles is a striking comment on these verses. Men, long deaf to God's words, now hear with open ears. The eyes of men long sitting in darkness now look forth from that darkness and see a glorious light. “And there is great joy in that city” (Acts 8: 8) among those converts from Gentile nations.

20. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and

the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

This joy in God and his gospel is followed by substantial reformation. Great sins are suppressed, repented of, forsaken, removed from the face of society. V. 20 specifies the tyrant ["the terrible one"]; the "scorner" who scoffs at things sacred; and "all who watch for iniquity," *i. e.*, devoted to its commission and looking eagerly for opportunity to do it. The wrongdoers described in v. 21 are those who in some way prevent the legal administration of justice in courts of law, *viz.*, those who mislead men and make them miss their ends of justice in their cause. The clause, "Make a man an offender for a word," means (probably) who make a man *miss his aim in his cause*.—Another sin is to lay a snare for him who rebukes wrong-doing in the gate, *i. e.*, to tempt with bribes the judge whose duty it is to rebuke sin in his court, held always at the city gates. The last named sin is that of turning aside the righteous, so as make them lose their case, for no good reason.—It is barely possible that the English version of the first clause, "make a man an offender for a word," may be the true sense; yet since the other clauses plainly refer to crimes in connection with judicial proceedings, it is strongly probable that this does also. The Hebrew, translated, "for a word" admits of being translated, "in his cause."—The general sense of these verses is that the gospel, going abroad among the Gentile nations, bore with it reform in morals and in the civil and common life of men. This was indeed the glory of Christianity. It molded society; became a mightily transforming power in courts of justice, in the defense of human rights, in promoting peace, good order, and the general welfare of society.

22. Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.

23. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

Finally the prophet predicts the gathering in of both Jews

and Gentiles. Jehovah, the same who redeemed Abraham, declares as to the house of Jacob, "He shall no longer be confounded" [put to shame before the world as a people excluded from God]; "no more shall his face" [for this cause] "turn pale." In this connection, Jacob is supposed to be among his remote descendants and sympathizing with their case. When he (thus present) shall see Gentile converts, said by the Lord to be "the work of my hands," gathering about him (the sense of "in the midst of him") "they shall hallow my name" in reverence and homage. Both he and all these Jews and Gentiles shall honor and praise the name of the same glorious God of Israel.—Those who have been known before all the world as wanderers in heart from truth and from God shall now have spiritual understanding. The murmuring and rebellious shall learn the true doctrine of God. This last verse seems to refer specially to Jews, long time apostate, proud, erring in spirit, but now humble learners at Messiah's feet.—In v. 23, the persons described as "the work of my hands," I take to be Gentile converts whose conversion God claims to be his own work. Precisely the same language has this sense applied to Assyria (chap. 19 : 25) : "Whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Assyria the work of my hands." The conversion of men is ascribed in general terms to God in the same language (Isaiah 60 : 21).—It seems in our passage to be tacitly implied that the Lord had done this *outside* of Jacob—outside the pale of his church and of its influence. God had brought unto Jacob Gentile sons and daughters to dwell in the midst of his lineal offspring. He intimates here that Jacob's heart will be made glad by this marvelous accession to his numbers, so that with one soul and voice both he and they will honor and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and the God of Israel for this precious and glorious ingathering.—The feelings of the spiritual Jacobs when in the future day they shall see those throngs of Gentile converts crowding their temple gates, are strongly put in chap. 49 : 18–23. They are touched in our passage more briefly, yet the spirit is here. That "good man," Barnabas, "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," felt this same gladness over the first body of Gentile converts he ever saw; and his case well illustrates the heart of the Jacob spoken of in the verses before us. See Acts 11 : 22–24.



## CHAPTER XXX.

THIS chapter opens, rebuking the Jews for seeking help from

Egypt against Assyria, accounting it rebellion against God and declaring that it should avail them nothing (vs. 1-7); and closes with predictions of the overthrow of the Assyrians by the high hand of Jehovah himself (vs. 27-33). The connection between these extremes of the chapter is made very pertinently by dwelling at some length upon the sins of the people, from which their seeking help from Egypt was a natural out growth, (vs. 8-17), and then turning in divine mercy to great promises of spiritual renovation, followed legitimately with promises of temporal deliverance from their enemies, from which the prophet passes to the special case of Assyria as happily illustrating the general principle of help from God to his believing people in their need (vs. 18-26).—It is more than legitimate to give the doctrines of this chapter a universal application to the sin of seeking help from man and to the duty of seeking help from God, for it was plainly the divine purpose to illustrate and impress these general principles—practically good for every age—rather than merely to give the world certain facts of Jewish history in respect to their relations to Egypt and Assyria.—What is said here of God's visitations of judgment upon wicked nations has an air of grandeur and magnificence rarely equaled by any other writer and rarely surpassed by Isaiah.

1. Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

2. That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

The Lord does not say, "*my children*," for they had practically disowned this relation by their rebellion against his authority. They were active and earnest in taking counsel, but not of God; in framing profound plans, but not in sympathy with God's spirit. They were bent on deep schemes of diplomacy, to make a league with Egypt against Assyria.—The words translated, "cover with a covering," Gesenius renders, *to pour out libations*, as a solemn ratification of an international covenant; so that the ultimate sense would be, who *made a treaty* with heathen nations, etc. Others render it to weave a web, *i. e.*, to cover their real designs, with probable reference to chap. 29: 15. All agree however that this is one step in the general movement to secure aid from Egypt.—So doing, they would add to the sin of heart apostasy from God the farther sin of a foreign alliance which would be at once insulting to God

and ensnaring to themselves. No step of such importance should under any circumstance be taken without first seeking counsel from God. But in this case the people knew they were going against his revealed will.—“Trusting in the shadow of Egypt” is more precisely seeking shelter *under* her shadow, in the shade of her protection.

3. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.

This trust in Egypt would surely disappoint and confound them, putting them to shame before the world.

4. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

5. They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

Manifestly these princes and ambassadors are those of the Jews, now seen in Egypt, to carry into effect the schemes of their king and his counselors in a league with the king of Egypt.—“Zoan” is referred to, chap. 19: 11, as the residence of the king and his court. It was a very ancient city (Num. 13: 22), and one of national importance (Ps. 78: 43).—It has proved more difficult to identify “Hanes.” Some have thought it to be the corresponding capital and royal residence of the king of Upper Egypt. Sevechus is supposed to have been at this time king of Lower Egypt and Tirhakah of Upper.—V. 5 gives the result—an utter failure. The people of Egypt can do nothing for them to purpose. The Hebrew is, “Not for help or profit *because* they were a shame and reproach.” The case was worse than a mere negation of help. It proved a positive disgrace and damage.

6. The burden of the beasts of the south. Into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence *come* the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people *that* shall not profit *them*.

The prophet sees and describes the caravan of Jewish ambassadors as they cross the Arabian desert on their way to Egypt, bearing ample presents to ingratiate the good will of Egypt's king. Lo! see the burden of those beasts going south, through a land of trouble and discomfort (to all travelers) whence come the lion and the lioness (Heb.,) etc. They bear their costly

presents on the only animals adapted to crossing the desert, asses and camels.

7. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.

The last half of this verse involves critical difficulties. The clause rendered, "Their strength is to sit still," is doubtless proverbial, and therefore exceedingly concise, sententious and perhaps enigmatical. The word rendered "strength" is *Rahab*, which as a common noun means pride, insolence, vain boasting; and as a proper noun means Egypt. The proverb has three Hebrew words, meaning *Egypt*, *i. e.*, the proud boaster—*they—to sit still*.—The clause next preceding, "Cried concerning this," means either, *cried out, saying to her*, what follows; or, "*I have called her by this name*," *i. e.*, have given her this name, *Rahab*. Or better than either of these constructions and borrowing something from each is this: I have proclaimed concerning her, as applicable to her, this well-known proverb in which her significant name stands prominent. This proverb may be somewhat closely rendered thus: "*Rahab* [proud braggart!]*—they—to sit still*," *i. e.*, are good for that and for nothing else. Plenty of proud boasting and of doing nothing! This is clearly the sense, caustic but truthful.—The use of *Rahab* for Egypt may be seen in Psalms 87 : 4, and 89 : 10, and Isaiah 51 : 9.

8. Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever :

9. That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD.

After a brief digression from the sins of Judah to the pride and inefficiency of Egypt, the prophet returns here to the same sad story of Judah's sin. The Lord commands, Write down their sin for a testimony to future ages, so that when fearful judgments from God shall have brought them low, and the remnant of their children shall inquire, Why this terrible desolation? the record may be at hand to testify to their sin. "This is a rebellious people, lying children," their sin involving not falsehood only but filial ingratitude, the sin of lying made doubly heinous because that of children against a divine Father. "They will not hear the law of the Lord," this "law" embracing all communications of his will, but especially those which were then coming fresh from the lips of his prophets.—As to the manner of this writing, the "table" [tablet] and the "book" are thought to be essentially synonymous.



10. Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

11. Get ye out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

So deeply infatuated in sin were this people that they even sought to seduce the Lord's prophets, exhorting them (so the Hebrew states and repeats it) not to see the truth for them, but to speak to them only smooth and delusive words. They chose pleasing lies rather than unwelcome truth. They could not bear to be annoyed in their sinful pursuits and pleasures, and were therefore ready to grasp the good of sinning recklessly and risk all the bad consequences!—"Get ye out of the way," does not mean precisely, get out of *our* way so that we may have a clear field for sinning with no obstructions; but this: Turn ye out of the *right* way; do not hesitate to turn aside never so much from the path of duty and right; run the risks of disobeying God even as we have resolved to do. Dare to sin on at all hazards and fear nothing!—And especially bring before us no more "the Holy One of Israel." We do not like either the name or the presence which it signifies. We can not bear to be reminded that God is holy, or that he has any special claims on us as being the God of Israel.—Some have supposed their objections to lie only against the *name*, "the Holy One of Israel." The better view is that they hated the name because it suggested the thing—that idea of God which they so dreaded.

12. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon;

13. Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

14. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit.

Did Isaiah purposely repeat the same offensive phrase, "the Holy One of Israel," both here and again in v. 15, to show them that despite of their dislikes, he should be faithful to his Master and to the truth? He certainly did not soften the stern and solemn tone of his messages from God for the sake of pleasing a wicked people.—"Because ye despise this word" of God, *i. e.*,

his law and his messages by his prophets, and "trust in perverseness," perverting moral ideas so as to make right seem wrong and wrong right; and because ye "*stay thereon*," not in the sense merely of *remaining* in that state, but of *reposing* on your lies and perversions of truth, putting them in the place of God as your refuge and consolation; therefore this sin of yours shall practically make a breach in the great and high wall of your home and city—your place of refuge. It shall work your ruin, as such a breach bilging out in a lofty wall brings down the whole structure with a fearful crash into one shapeless mass of ruins! This great wall shall be shattered to atoms like a potter's vessel broken into fragments so small that one can not be found large enough to take up fire from the hearth, or to dip water from a cesspool—a forcible image of that utter ruin which must crush down all the refuges of proud and impious men.

15. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

Their guilt was the greater because God had plainly told them how and where they might have strength and salvation, but they would not take his counsel. In returning to me and in resting upon me, ye shall have salvation; in quietness as opposed to agitation and anxiety; in confidence as opposed to distrust and unbelief, shall be your strength—said with an eye to their national danger from the Assyrians when they were disowning God and looking to Egypt instead. This political state of the nation is manifestly before the prophet's mind and gives shape to his language. But the sentiments are good for all circumstances of human want and trial. God would have his teaching in this case apply to every possible case which involves like principles.

16. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

17. One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

The play upon words which is prominent in the Hebrew is apparent in the English version. Of course the prophet's object is to give an edge to his threatenings and make them take hold of dull and perverse minds.—Ye said "No, but let us flee upon horses; therefore ye shall have ample occasion to flee."

—Horses were contraband according to the spirit if not the exact letter of the Hebrew institutions. The implication here is that they would go down into Egypt for horses. The prophet replies, If ye do, ye shall have flight enough for their use. If ye get the means of riding swiftly, your pursuers too shall be swift.—In the clause, “One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one,” “rebuke” may be understood to mean a menace or threat, implying that the Jews are panic-smitten before any real blow is struck.—“Beacon” is not the best word here. It is rather a flag-pole—a solitary staff or rod supporting a flag or ensign. The thought seems to be, Ye shall flee in all directions till two are no where left together. Ye may be seen winding your way over the distant hill-tops, or standing there in dismay; but every man *alone*, so utter is your dispersion and so completely is your military power broken.—The threatening of calamity closes here;—indeed, how could it farther go? The people are utterly broken down. Hence this extremity becomes God’s opportunity for signal mercy; as we shall see.

18. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.

In this verse critics have labored specially upon the word “*Therefore.*” What they ask, can be the logical connection which it indicates? Was it because the people were so wicked that the Lord became so gracious? And especially they say, How comes it that his mercy seems to rest upon his justice;—“*for* the Lord is a God of judgment?” Is it not the function of judgment to consume and destroy, rather than to pity and save?—Replying to this last point first in order, I do not make “judgment” here precisely synonymous with justice, certainly not with justice when put in antithesis with mercy. It rather means *right-doing* in view of the circumstances of the case. That God is a God of judgment assumes that he doeth all things well. Consequently in his compassionate desire to save ruined sinners, he will make his inflictions of calamity as effective as possible to reclaim, and when the sinner is broken in heart by being broken down in power and in hope, the Lord’s judgment will ensure his being treated with wondrous compassion and loving kindness. As to the first point of inquiry: What is the logical connection expressed by the word “therefore?” I answer, It is assumed that extreme calamity has broken down the vain self-confidence of the Lord’s late apostate people. Like the starving prodigal, feeding on swine husks, they have come to themselves and are looking with longing eye toward their father’s house. Chastisement has had the desired effect, and hence the time for mercy

has now come. It is of the Lord's overflowing love that he watches the first indications of repentance and puts in a promise there! Sweet, blessed encouragement to those solitary wanderers over the waste hill-tops of desolation to turn their steps homeward to their father's house!—"Therefore," because there is hope now that some sinner, broken down in his fancied strength, broken down in his vain pride, may be drawn back to God—"therefore," saith the kind voice, "will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted" (standing on high, prominently, visible to the eye of every wandering, home-bound prodigal) "that he may have mercy upon you." "Blessed are all they that wait for him," waiting upon him in supplication, and waiting in hope for his promised blessings.

19. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

For these dispersed Jews, once more returning to God in penitence and faith, shall dwell again in Zion, even in Jerusalem, all their former blessings restored to them and even more abundantly. Tears wiped away; prayer answered as soon as heard—such language betokens the great tenderness and richness of God's love to returning penitents.

20. And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.

The word "*though*" is not expressed in the Hebrew; is it certainly implied? And again a question of interest turns upon the tense of the first verb, "give." Does it locate this distress in the present or in the past; contemporaneously with these spiritual blessings, or only with the former calamities?—On this last point, the law of Hebrew syntax requires the present and forbids the past. Hence we must hold that the word "*though*" is virtually implied. The restored and forgiven people are not placed instantly in the height of prosperity. As in the case of those who returned from captivity in Babylon, serious hardships were the first lessons; but God gave them a precious faith and a rich renewal of divine light, instruction, and consequent spiritual comfort. Such is the course of thought here. Ye may expect some straitness for earthly bread; but ye shall have an abundance of the bread of divine light, the bread of heaven. Thy teachers shall not hide themselves away in corners any more, as

men driven from their homes by persecution; but thine eyes shall see them at all points present and ready to teach thee the word and will of God.

21. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Now whenever ye turn aside to the left hand or to the right and, ye shall hear a kind voice recalling you to the true path. His voice would come from behind them, they having turned away from their spiritual leaders.

22. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

The meaning here is that they shall put away idolatry and everything associated with it, repelling it with intense disgust and loathing. The "covering of their graven images" is specified because this was often exceedingly rich, of gold and silver, very attractive therefore, and the last thing to be given up. Considered as a special prophecy, this had a very striking fulfillment when the Jews returned from Babylon. But in the spirit of it, it is fulfilled in the case of every real penitent. He hates his former sins and thrusts them away with all his heart. So he ought to do; and more than this, so he actually *does* if his penitence is sincere.

23. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

24. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been rinnowed with the shovel and with the fan.

Under the ancient dispensation, temporal good, *e. g.*, timely rains, ample harvests, well-fed cattle, were indications of God's favor, and hence might naturally become figures for his gracious spiritual presence. In this passage (vs. 23-26) some expressions are manifestly figurative. But whatever doubt may rest on any clause as between the literal and the figurative sense, of this we may be sure: it testifies to the loving-kindness of God—always the main and vital thing.—In v. 24, "*ear* the ground" is the old verb for *plow*. The Hebrew is rather more general, to *work* the ground, to cultivate it.—In the phrase,

"*clean* provender," some critics say *salted*; others, *well-fermented*. Our English translators took the meaning from the last clause. The later critics look to the sense of the original word as gathered from the etymology. The ultimate sense is, that which is choice, first-rate.

25. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

26. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

Rivers and streams run usually in valleys and not on the hill or mountain tops. Hence the thing affirmed of them here must denote very rich blessings; as on the other hand, great slaughter and falling towers indicate fearful calamities.—The phrase, "in the day of," corresponding to the common expression, "It shall come to pass in that day," more often means, *in near connection with*, rather than precisely at the same time. Hence this verse probably means only that shortly *after* the great calamities and notwithstanding their terrific desolations, blessings equally signal will come. Extremes meet. The terrible scourge has prepared the people for superlative blessings. The same sense is given under other figures in the next verse. In the day when God bindeth up the breach of his people, the augmentation of light from the heavenly bodies shall be great, even sevenfold and more. The light of seven days compressed into one; the light of the moon becoming as that of the sun; these are magnificent figures and must be freighted with a wealth of precious significance.—It has been fitly said that these must be figures, for the literal fulfillment would be a calamity and not a blessing. These mortal eyes could not bear such outbursting, dazzling, perpetual effulgence. But Zion's spiritual light can never be in excess. O, might it blaze abroad and illumine the wide world with the wealth of glory indicated by these magnificent words! One day *it will*. The promise is good for it!

27. Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof* is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire.

Here is a sudden transition from direct blessings on God's

to judgments on their enemies. These judgments however really blessings on his accepted people.—V. 31 It is certain that this entire passage (vs. 27–33) has a special reference to the destruction of Sennacherib's army. This case is referred to here, in part at least, as an illustration of a general law of divine interposition for the deliverance of faithful trusting people. What God did for Hezekiah and his people, he will do in like circumstances for any and every generation of his chosen.—The “name of the Lord” signifies his manifestations, God himself as seen in the special revelation of his glory. This use of the word is perhaps due to the circumstance that the names of God are all significant of his attributes. Hence the “coming of his name from far” denotes a distant revelation of his attributes; here those of power and majesty. The whole description is grand, not to say, awful. It is, awakening the energies of his being to intense activity, coming from afar, burning with anger (speaking after the manner of men), and heavy are the columns of rising smoke (probable sense of the Hebrew); his lips full of indignation; his tongue like a devouring fire;—Who could stand before such a coming wrath? He comes forth to lay low in death that Assyrian host. All the agencies of fire, coupled with actual declarations of burning wrath, set forth his earnestness in this work and the fearfulness of his manifestations to effect it.

And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall come to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to err.

It is not “his breath,” but “the overflowing stream” which comes to the middle of the neck. Literally, this last phrase which *divides* upon” (or at) “the neck,” i. e., divides at the neck between the part under water, and the part above it. The accumulation of diverse figures in this verse is peculiar: such as a flood; a winnowing sieve, and a bridle. “The sieve of vanity” shakes out and assort, for destruction, as chaff from the grain.—A bridle in the jaws is used elsewhere to represent God's turning nations about at his will; here in a specific sense of leading them into paths of disappointment and evil.—The resources of the Almighty One for the accomplishment of his will, and, if he so please, the destruction of great and wicked nations, surpass the power of any possible accumulation of figures to represent it. We may therefore excuse the prophet for piling them up, though it may seem to be done rudely, and must admit, strongly—as by one whose soul is full of

the appalling scene and who can find no metaphors adequate to do it justice.

29. Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when* a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Mighty One of Israel.

If Jerusalem had only known what was transpiring in that Assyrian camp during that eventful night, it would indeed have been a night of glorious song! How the harps would have waked their melodies and every voice swelled the chorus of hallelujahs!—The prophet here thinks, for comparison, of the joyful songs on the evenings of the great national feasts when the gathered thousands from every part of the land blended voice and harp and organ in grand unison to sing of the God of Israel.

30. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire, *with* scattering, and tempest, and hail-stones.

31. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which* smote with a rod.

While his people make their voice heard in songs of praise to God, he makes his voice heard in thunder and the flash of his arms seen in lightning for the overwhelming of his foes. In this verse again, the prophet groups boldly and almost rudely together all the grand agencies of lightning and fire, tempest and storm. Before such an inundation of agencies for destruction, the Assyrian is beaten down—falling never to rise.—In the last clause, the translation—“*Which* smote with the rod”—changes the agent (the smiter) to the Assyrian and makes the passage refer to his previous smiting of the Jews, and perhaps other nations as well. The better construction refers this smiting also to Jehovah. “By the voice of Jehovah is the Assyrian beaten down [God], smiting [him] with the rod.” The next verse shows that it is the Lord who is thought of as smiting. The last clause is explanatory of what is said figuratively of the *voice*. I said *voice* but meant *rod*.

32. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass which the LORD shall lay upon him, *it* shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it.

I give my views of the sense of the Hebrew in this translation; “And every stroke of the rod of doom which the Lord



brings down upon him" [the Assyrian], "shall be with tabrets and harps;" the people of God responding to every such blow upon their foes from God's uplifted hand with their songs of uplifted praise.—What our translators understood to refer to the place where the staff should pass, is now generally admitted to refer to the *passing* or *coming down* of the rod itself.—"Every passing" [down from above upon the victim] "of this scourging rod," etc.—What they translate a "grounded staff," means, a staff divinely appointed, ordained of God for its mission of death; and therefore fitly translated; "rod of destiny" or "doom," considered however as determined not by an unintelligent fate, but by the all-intelligent Ruler of the universe.—The last clause of the verse means that the conflict is with struggles of tremendous concussion and shaking. "With it," we may take to mean, with the Assyrian host.

33. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea for the king it is prepared; he hath made *it* deep *and* large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This allusion to Tophet is the earliest which appears in the Scriptures. Additional particulars appear in the history of Josiah's reformation, 2 Kings 33: 10, and in Jer. 7: 31, and 19: 6, 11-14. See notes on these passages in Jeremiah.—The prophet here represents Tophet as a place prepared for the burning of the Assyrian king. Made deep and large, with fire and wood in abundance, prepared for the king, and of course, he being thrown upon it, the breath of the Lord kindles it into its fearful conflagration. This is, of course, a figurative description, Tophet being made the central point in the figure because it was a well-known place for the burning of dead bodies, and also of all manner of filth from the city, Jerusalem.—The question will arise whether this passage refers at all to the punishment of the wicked after death.—I see nothing in it to forbid such reference. It might also be said that if the Scriptures no where else taught that the wicked are punished after death, we could not be sure that the doctrine lies here. But since they do teach this fearful truth most clearly and abundantly, and moreover, since our Lord took up this very figure, Tophet under the name Gehenna, *i. e.*, valley of Hinmon and obtained from it his distinctive name for the place of this future punishment, and moreover drew figures from the scenes of its history to represent this punishment, the presumption becomes strong that Isaiah had his eye on, not merely the mortal death but the future doom also of this proud enemy of God's cause and people.—We are in no need of this passage as a proof text for the doom of the wicked in hell. The

question above considered is mainly important as throwing light upon the historical development of this great truth, showing how early it was understood and accepted in the established belief of God's people.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE scope of thought in this short chapter resembles that in chap. 30, save that it omits the detailed account of the sins of Judah which appears in chap. 30: 8-17.—This begins with a woe on those who go to Egypt for help; declares this help to be weakness, on which moreover God will bring ruin; but he will himself deliver his own people. This chapter closes like the one before with the illustrative case of his destroying the Assyrian power.

1. Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Egypt and Assyria, being nearly matched in military power and for ages embittered against each other by their mutual aggressions and wars, it would naturally seem to be the height of wisdom for the Jews, assailed or threatened by either one of these powers, to make common cause with the other. Hence, to the ungodly in the times of Ahaz and Hezekiah, it seemed to be manifestly wise to look to Egypt for help against Assyria. But the Lord's people had not the least occasion to look elsewhere than to their own God. To do so was practically to ignore and disown the God of Zion and of their fathers. Besides; such alliances would ensnare them fatally away from their own God into idolatry.—The word rendered chariots is singular. Etymological it means a *riding*, and as has been noted (chap. 21: 7) seems often, as here, to mean cavalry. The ancients placed great reliance on horses in war; more, relatively, than military men of modern times. Probably the Jews valued cavalry the more because they had none of their own. Hence the great temptation to go to Egypt for horses, and hence too the natural association of horses with Egypt in the matter of foreign help. Profane history is full of evidence, concurrent with the allusions here,

to the point that Egypt was renowned for its horses and cavalry. "Homer describes Thebes as having one hundred gates out of each of which two hundred warriors went forth with chariots and horses. Dioborus speaks of the whole country between Thebes and Memphis as filled with royal stables. The horses of Solomon are expressly said to have been brought out of Egypt." (Alexander's Com.)

2. Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.

God is too wise to be outwitted by your schemes for foreign aid. He will surely frustrate those schemes; will bring evil upon both your helpers and yourselves; will not recall his words (*i. e.*, of threatening); will arouse himself against the whole race of evil-doers (wicked Jews), and also against the help they are seeking, *viz.*, the Egyptians who are being called in to aid the workers of iniquity among you.

3. Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

This contrast is put with unsurpassed force. Why should the Jews call on Egypt for help rather than upon God? The Egyptians are frail men, not Almighty Gods; their horses are flesh; mortal, perishable, and not to be named in comparison with the spiritual agencies which God so easily employs. Think what one angel achieved in a single night as he walked forth in the camp of the Assyrians! What are the horsemen of Egypt to that! So when God shall stretch out his hand, both the helper, Egypt, and the helped, Judah, shall fall in ruin together!

4. For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, *he* will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

The Lord will protect his people as the lion stands by his prey and suffers no power, not even a multitude of shepherds to wrest it from him or even disturb his equanimity.—The translation, "*Roaring* upon his prey," seems to suppose that he is pur-

suing but has not yet seized it. But the figure here takes the lion at a later point. He has his lamb already by him and *growls* over it [so the Hebrew]; bidding defiance to never so many shepherds who would fain rescue the lamb. So God covers his people and defies all foreign assailants.—It is very unusual to compare God protecting his people to a lion protecting his prey from being rescued, and this prey by the supposition a lamb, and the rescuers, his shepherds, yet such is the figure here.—The lion *roars* upon his prey before he seizes it, but only *growls* over it while he stands protecting it as his spoil. The Hebrew verbs recognize this distinction. The verb here is growl, not roar. The sentiment therefore is that the Lord stands over Mount Zion protecting her with such strength and majesty as no powers of earth or hell can overcome or even intimidate.

5. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver *it*; and passing over he will preserve *it*.

These "flying birds" being feminine, are the mother birds hovering round their young to protect them. As such flying birds do, so will the Lord defend his nestlings, however weak they may be in themselves. Our Savior has nearly the same figure; "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens," etc., Mat. 23: 37.—"*Passing over*," is the word made sacred in Hebrew history and literature on that eventful night when Egypt's first-born fell, but the destroyer "*passed over*" the thresholds on which the blood of sprinkling had fallen. So under the shield of atoning blood and divine mercy, Israel is now safe. God will pass over her in a sense analogous to that ancient passing over.

6. Turn ye unto *him* from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

7. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you *for a sin*.

Turn back to him from whom as a nation ye have revolted so deeply. To "make deep their revolting" [the Hebrew idiom] implies that the spirit of their revolts had gone deep into their hearts; that they were terribly in earnest in it; perhaps also with an implication of deep and crafty purpose which the passage, chap. 29: 15, involves. In that day of deliverance all trust in man and all trust in idols (naturally associated) are repudiated together. Idols were often silver-plated and gold-plated.—"*Made for yourselves as a sin*," implies that this was their great sin and an occasion of more sinning. This abbreviated expres-

sion which calls the idol *their sin* occurs (Deut. 9: 21) where Moses said, "I took *your sin*, the calf which ye had made, burnt it with fire" etc. Also Amos 8: 14 "They that swear by the sin of Samaria," *i. e.*, her idol god.

8. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him; but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.

The Assyrian shall fall by the sword of one more than mortal. The thought is strongly put in the negative form—"by the sword of no man," but of one higher and more than man.—There may or may not be an antithesis between the mighty man and the mean man. The words would admit it, but do not require it.—The last clause should probably be read, "His young men" (his warriors) "shall be for tribute," *i. e.*, shall be subjected to tribute under their conquerors. This is the usual sense of the original word.

9. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

The word for "strong hold" means primarily a rock; sometimes a fortress built (as they often were) upon a high rock. Dr. Alexander takes it here in the abstract sense of *strength* and makes it the subject of the verb, thus: His strength shall pass away through fear.—The better established sense of the word is equally good here: "Through fear he shall pass over beyond his strong fortress;" *i. e.*, panic-smitten by the fearful blow which crushed his army, he not only flees for home, but flees even *beyond* his strong hold—the sense of *passing beyond* coming in this case from the verb. His princes too as well as himself are panic struck. They tremble at everything that even looks like a military ensign.—So saith the Lord whose altar-fires burn in Zion, and whose fires for consuming his enemies are kept heated as a furnace in Jerusalem. There may be here a double allusion—(1.) To the altar on which the sacred fire was kept; and (2.) To fire as the symbol of God's consuming judgments which are often conceived of as going forth from Jerusalem against his foes, and therefore may be supposed to be kept there as in a furnace.—Some have supposed an allusion to the furnace as an article of household furniture, to indicate that God lived and (so to speak) "kept house" in Jerusalem. The former is more in harmony with the usual conception of God in his relations to

Jerusalem and to her enemies, and is also indefinitely more sublime and grand, and hence more in keeping with the style of Isaiah.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

IN this chapter the first eight verses constitute one distinct portion; the remaining twelve verses another. In the first part a new state of things appears, morally and politically; a king reigning for the ends of righteousness; the moral perceptions of the people quickened and corrected; their sentiments also brought back to truth and righteousness.—This portion is remarkably general in its statements. Hence commentators have been perplexed with the question whether it refers specially to Hezekiah or to the Messiah, or to some one else; while some have thought its statements to be purposely general and not intended to apply exclusively to any one king.—It will be observed that the prophet does not say that *the* king, *the* Branch, *the* Son of David, shall reign; but only that “*a* king” (v. 1) “shall reign and prosper.” It is not *the* man, of promise, designated and made prominent by prophecy; but “*a* man” (v. 2) who “shall be as a hiding-place from the wind,” etc. Also, the reference to “princes,” subordinate rulers (v. 1), leads the mind to Hezekiah or to some merely human king rather than to the Messiah.—The choice of construction lies between the theory of a general statement with no special, exclusive reference to any one king, and the theory of a primary reference to Hezekiah and a secondary one to the Messiah—the former in his character as a great moral reformer being considered as a sort of representative of the latter. I incline to this last mentioned view for reasons which will appear more fully in my notes on the passage.—The second part (vs. 9–20) makes a special call to the careless women of Jerusalem; predicts grievous calamities which shall continue until a precious effusion of God’s Spirit shall bring the people back to God and righteousness. Then prosperity shall ensue.

1. Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

The scenes now before the prophet stand in close relation with the scenes of the recent past. The king and people have

ceased to trust in Egypt: the blindness and unbelief which turned their eye of hope from God to Egypt have passed away, and better moral vision has taken its place: divine judgments have been sanctified to the people; and not least, the signal overthrow of the Assyrian host has made solemn impressions of the power, the faithfulness, and the loving care of God for his Zion. Now the good Hezekiah appears, ruling for the interests and ends of righteousness and calling the people back to the pure worship of their God. It is a great national revival of religion. Public sentiment is morally regenerated.—Hence this new scene has in its foreground the good Hezekiah and shows how he reigns, viz., for the purpose of promoting intrinsic righteousness; a righteous heart and life as toward both their fellow-men and their God.—“*In righteousness*,” expresses the idea fairly; but the Hebrew means more precisely, *for* righteousness, i. e., unto the ends of righteousness, making this result his all-controlling aim and purpose. The recent history of the nation and the points brought forward in the three next preceding chapters accord well with the interpretation which applies this verse primarily to Hezekiah. This general accord becomes an argument at once legitimate and strong for its reference in its primary sense to him.

2. And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

In its primary sense this must mean: Behold, how one good man may become a great moral power for the protection of the wronged and for the comfort and happiness of a whole people. The figures to represent this are plain as well as beautiful; a shelter from fierce wind; a covert from storm; or like rivers over a dry desert; or the shadow of a great rock in a land where men become weary with toil, heat, and thirst, and find no shade of leaf or dell—naught but a great rock to cast a shadow for their shelter from the sun. These are lively emblems of the rich, exhaustless blessings that have come to our lost race through the one great man Jesus, in whom the divine Messiah became incarnate. How distinctly the prophet had this in view, it may not be possible for us to determine. The fullness and wealth of his figures seem to favor this reference, and yet more does the allusion (v. 15) to the “pouring out of the Spirit” as the special agent and cause of this great moral renovation and its consequent fruits of righteousness and peace.

3. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

The moral blindness and deafness of which he had before spoken repeatedly as the most fearful manifestations of wickedness have now passed away. See what is said of this moral blindness, chaps. 29 : 10-12, and 30 : 9-11, and of its removal, chaps. 29 : 18, and 30 : 20, 21.—A glorious blessing it is indeed when those who have eyes to see keep those eyes open to the truth of God, and when those who have ears to hear hold them in earnest attention to what God may say.

4. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

The "rash" or hasty, are the men of precipitate, ill-considered opinions, who do not give time or attention enough to God's word and truth to understand it rightly. But even these now understand in reference to knowledge, *i. e.*, the knowledge of God.—"The tongue of those who stammer shall hasten to speak plainly," is the statement in the original. But this natural impediment, a stammering tongue, must be understood as looking to a corresponding infirmity in the mental apprehension and doctrinal statement of the truth. Those who apprehend truth very imperfectly, with lame distorted views, will inevitably blunder and half state whatever they but half understand. But in these good times men both see and teach in the sunlight of truth.

5. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said *to be* bountiful.

Wicked men will now be esteemed according to their true character and merits. Good names shall no more be given to bad men. Isaiah had already denounced the woes of God upon the moral perverseness which calls evil good, and good evil (chap. 5 : 20). Here he makes it one of the characteristics of a great reform in society that this perverseness no longer takes on a practical form. Men no longer call a *nabal* (the "fool" of Scripture) a *noble* man. The niggardly churl does not enjoy the reputation of being "bountiful." The kidnapper, who lives by stealing men, and the master, who rolls in wealth extorted with the scourge from unpaid labor, shall no longer bear himself in society as the chivalrous noble-souled gentleman of the first grade of social refinement and christian civilization. Such moral perversions of truth and reason slink away into darkness and shame under the clear shining of heaven's own truth.

6. For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy, and to



utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

This verse endorses the correct moral sentiments of which he had just spoken, declaring that they are in accordance with facts and righteousness. The vile person *ought* to be no more called liberal "*for*" he will speak villainy, etc. The sense might be put in paraphrase, thus: So it should be, "*for* the fool [in wickedness] will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, even to work out horrible *wickedness* (rather than "hypocrisy"); and even to speak falsehood as to God, to the length of starving the hungry and denying water to those who are perishing with thirst.—The extreme inhumanities here adduced are manifestly thought of as outrages against God, and practically as involving the worst forms of error as to him and as to the duties we owe him. The general usage of the word rendered "hypocrisy" shows it to mean any extreme form of wickedness.

7. The instruments also of the churl *are* evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.

The "churl" (a man both niggardly and covetous) should by no means be called "bountiful," *i. e.*, liberal, generous, for his means of enriching himself ("his instruments") will be bad. He will devise crafty schemes to destroy the poor with lying words (overreaching, defrauding, getting the advantage unjustly) even when the poor man has justice on his side, *i. e.*, as said here, when his speaking (statements) are all right (in Heb "judgment"). They that will be rich fall into this ruinous temptation to over-estimate their own claims, and under-estimate or even quite disregard the claims and rights of others, and especially of those who are defenseless against their aggressions.

8. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

On the other hand, the really liberal, noble-hearted man will approve himself by his deeds. He will devise, not "wicked devices," but "liberal things," and upon these he will *stand* in the sense of persevering in them and building up himself upon them. Hence, as the conclusion of this special subject, that is a blessed state of society in which men are estimated according to what they truly are, and the name they bear in common parlance, witnesses truly to the character of their deeds. When every man's reputation and name shall be *as* his heart and life, virtue will have its due honor, and vice its merited disgrace.

These awards of merit will conduce powerfully to promote the former and repress the latter.

9. Rise up, ye women that are at ease ; hear my voice, ye careless daughters ; give ear unto my speech.

In chap. 3 : 16-24 the Lord rebukes the proud effeminate daughters of Jerusalem as a class largely responsible for the general corruption of society, and moreover as specially concerned in the terrible judgments with which God would punish the nation's sins. For similar reasons we may suppose the female portion of the community are specified here. The only point in their moral state made prominent is a careless, reckless mind. They were *at ease* while they were deep in sin, and had been sinking the nation down fearfully into moral degradation. Hence the prophet sounds his trumpet blast of warning to awaken them from those guilty slumbers and arouse their attention.

10. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.

The margin gives the literal translation of the first clause, "Days above a year," *i. e.*, more than a year. But the question still remains whether this is *time when*, or *time how long*. The former is much the more probable, since it is scarcely supposable that the prophet would name the length of a period of calamity which should last but little more than one year. Besides, the context (vs. 14, 15) represents this calamity to be very long, and to continue until the Spirit should be poured out, etc.—The other alternative therefore must be accepted, *viz.*, that within little more than a year, very soon, this terrible scourge of devastation should come down upon them. A year and little more is a very suitable length of time to intervene between the threatening and the coming of the judgment threatened. Statements of time in Hebrew are often made in this indefinite form, the precise sense to be determined by the context.—The failure of the harvests and consequent famine, was to be one of the developments of this scourge.

11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease ; be troubled, ye careless ones : strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.

These are the usual manifestations of grief. Lay off your proud and gay apparel ; put on the coarse sackcloth of mourning.

12. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.

The better rendering of the first clause is, "*Smiting upon your breasts*" on account of the pleasant fields, *i. e.*, for the loss of their products. Such smiting was one of the most common and expressive symbols of agony. The words themselves, as well as the known usages of mourning, seem to demand this translation.

13. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city.

The word rendered "*Yea*" is strictly "*for*," the thought being that there will surely be thorns and briers upon the land, because desolation comes upon all the joyful houses of the exultant city. If on these latter, then much more in the shape of thorns upon the former.

14. Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.

He still expands the thought of desolation in the city. "The multitude of the city shall be left," does not mean that the masses of the people are left in the city, but the opposite of this, *viz.*, that the city, once thronged with people, is now forsaken and left desolate.—A sad scene of desolation is painted in the words that follow. "The forts (better the hill *Ophel*, one of the hills on which the city, Jerusalem, was built) and the watch-tower shall be dens for wild animals," etc.

15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Physical desolation in Jerusalem shall be the index and accompaniment of her moral desolation, until this new and glorious epoch—the effusion of the Spirit of God upon the city; then the wilderness shall become a fruitful field. Plants of righteousness, verdant in beauty and rich in fruitage, shall adorn what so lately was only a howling waste. This phrase, "The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest," is no doubt proverbial. See its use, chap. 29 : 17. Legitimately, it would seem to imply changes in both directions, from waste to culture and fruit, and *vice versa*, from fruit-bearing to a state of nature again. But here the proverb is plainly used only for the sake of its first half, this part alone

being applicable.—It can scarcely be doubted that this allusion to the Spirit has a somewhat special reference to that great effusion with which the gospel age opened. Yet this should not be pressed so as to exclude other cases of like sort. The passage rather teaches the general doctrine that moral degeneracy brings upon men physical desolation and that both the degeneracy and the desolation will continue according to the laws of human nature and of society, until God's Spirit is poured out from on high. The recuperative power which redeems society and recalls men to penitence and a new life is not in themselves, nor in God's judgments alone, but really in the Spirit of God. Hence the Jewish nation continued impenitent and unreclaimed through the wicked reign of Ahaz, and onward until the effusions of God's Spirit in the times of Hezekiah. On a yet broader scale, the nation, save at few exceptional periods, declined in its moral tone during the ages until their Messiah came, and yet more rapidly during his earthly life and public ministry until the Spirit was gloriously shed forth on the day of Pentecost; then blessed life came up upon that *death*, and a precious remnant were redeemed.

16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

Whether men's external circumstances correspond to a wilderness or to a fruitful field, the fruits of the Spirit of God in their souls will be judgment and righteousness. How little those fruits of the Spirit are dependent on earthly conditions, on the trivial circumstances of wealth and prosperity, affliction or poverty; all experience and observation testify.—In v. 17 "righteousness" must be taken in a broad sense, involving primarily a just government, but including also righteousness in all the relations and transactions of life; righteousness between man and man; righteousness in the family as well as in general society; and radically righteousness toward God, the fear of his name and reverence for his law.—The fruit of such righteousness is forcibly said to be "peace;" and since the last clause is strictly parallel, its fruit is also "quietness and assurance forever." Being at peace with God as well as with each other, men who are thoroughly, religiously righteous, repose sweetly in God and rest in the assurance of his love forever.

18. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,

So surely God's people, walking in his light, shall have peace and dwell securely. Dr. Alexander says beautifully, "There is something tranquillizing in the very sound of this delightful promise, which as usual is limited to God's own people, implying either that all should have become such, or that those who had not should be still perturbed and restless."

19. When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

Exegetically, the main question on this verse is whether the evils which it threatens fall on the enemies of God's people, or upon their own city and country so as naturally to affect themselves. The English version assumes the latter and implies that the people of God shall be quiet and without carefulness even while hailstones crash through the forest and the city itself is laid prostrate. There being nothing else in the chapter which refers to a foreign enemy, it is probable that this does not. If not, then it represents the people of God as personally in peace and rest while walking before him in righteousness, even though hailstones tear the forest and cities are laid low.—So sweet and safe a rest they find under the wing of infinite love!

20. Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

It has been questioned whether the "sending forth of the ox and the ass" is to their feeding in the pasture, or to their plowing and treading in of seed in the corn-field. I accept the latter view, partly because these are precisely the animals for this work while any and all domestic animals are turned out to pasture, and partly because the thought of the passage is upon sowing. The general sentiment taken literally (*i. e.*, agriculturally), is, Happy are they who sow in all well-watered tracts and freely use the ox and the ass in their work. But taken figuratively, as the exigencies of the context require, the prophet declares the blessedness of those who, however disturbed society may be, or however much the nation may rock under hail-storms and bewail its fallen cities, yet press on with unwearied assiduity, doing what good they can, sowing seed unto salvation beside all waters and pushing every fit agency wisely and without faltering. The spirit of the verse suggests these words of the Psalmist: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126: 6.)—In Christ's gospel kingdom there will be such faithful workers. The words that affirm their blessedness of course assume their existence and their faithful work. Happy men! May your number be multiplied a thousand fold and God fill your lap with munificent sheaves!

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE central historic fact of this chapter is the destruction of the Assyrian army, apparently when near Jerusalem. The woe of v. 1 refers to them: the prayer of v. 2 seeks help from God against them; the scenes that follow cluster about that great event. In the last half of the chapter (vs. 13-24) the event is supposed to have taken place, and the prophet gives us some of its various effects and results.

1. Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; *and* when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

It is due to the great law of divine retribution that wicked nations, having abused their great power to subdue, spoil and oppress others, should be themselves in turn subdued and spoiled. If they have not had their retribution yet, all the more surely is it still in store, awaiting its time. Hence this woe on the proud and conquering Assyrian. His career of conquest and oppression had been long and had now reached its limit. The retributions of justice were therefore at hand.—Habakkuk applies this same law of retribution to the Chaldean power (2: 8): "Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the nations shall spoil thee." Assyria had spoiled others: she had not yet had her retribution in being spoiled. She had dealt treacherously, and thus far, without experiencing like treachery from others: but now her time of retribution has come.

2. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

Such surroundings constitute the very time for God's people to pray. When that formidable host were marching down upon Jerusalem, every pious heart should have been bowed before

God, imploring his interposing arm to help. No doubt there *was prayer there*. Here it stands. "We have waited on thee with our imploring cries; we still beseech thee to be gracious unto us." The change of person "*their* arm;" "*our* salvation;" may be readily explained by supposing that the prophet begins with his own prayer, "be thou *their* arm;" but closes by uniting himself with the people, "*our* salvation. God's arm is thought of as his instrument of power to help.

3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

Faith rests on the universal truth that whenever God has aroused himself, the nations have quailed and fled in wild dismay before him. It must be so forever, for what earthly power can stand undaunted before the dreadful God!

4. And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

Suddenly the prophet turns to accost the fleeing Assyrians, the nation doomed to spoil.—Your spoil shall all be gathered up as the swarms of countless caterpillars and locusts lick up every green thing. As such locusts skip and jump about in gathering their food, so shall the spoilers pass over all the spoil of their host, running to and fro.

5. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

The Lord is (or has been) exalted, *i. e.*, in the overthrow of the Assyrian host—a thing he could easily do, "*for* he dwelleth on high," clothed with all power in heaven and earth. He hath thoroughly vindicated his Zion against the contempt of her enemies, revealing himself as the righteous God so gloriously that he may be said to have *filled* Zion with these manifestations. The context and scope of thought favor this sense rather than that of filling the people with these qualities of character. Yet the filling of his people with intrinsic righteousness would be a natural antecedent as well as resulting consequent of such displays of his retributive justice.

7. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

The collocation of words in the original favors the following simple construction; "and he" (*i. e.*, Jehovah, continued from the previous verse) "shall be the security of thy times, thy wealth

of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord shall be *his* treasure," *i. e.*, the treasure of the king, with some allusion perhaps to Hezekiah's loss of treasure by reason of the enormous tribute exacted of him by the Assyrian king. God will now become his treasure, more than making good all his loss. The sentiment of the verse is that God has now become every thing, all in all, to his saved and trusting people—their stability as a nation; their fountain of salvation; their source of wisdom and knowledge.

7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

The next three verses (7-9) fall back to describe the scenes of dismay and agitation which immediately preceded that night of great deliverance.—The word rendered "valiant ones," involves critical difficulties, yet the current of modern opinion runs in favor of the English version. Even the bravest Jewish soldiers cry out in consternation as men who dare not face a foe so fearful.—"The ambassadors of peace" are probably those three men whose names, mission, negotiations, failure and bitter grief, appear in the passages, 2 Kings 18: 18-37, and Isaiah 36: 3-22. The history records that they came back to Hezekiah "with their clothes rent," corresponding to the statement here; "Shall weep bitterly."

8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

The classic description of an oriental country exposed to a foreign invader, is given by Deborah (Judges 5: 6). "The highways were unoccupied, and the travelers walked through by-ways." So here, the usual highways are deserted; people cease to travel.—The historian of 2 Kings (18: 13-17) gives the history correlated to this prophecy in the point of "breaking the covenant," showing that Hezekiah sent to the king of Assyria, who was assaulting the cities of Judah, and already at Lachish; confessed his fault in having suspended his annual tribute; said, "Return from me; that which thou puttest on me, I will bear." The Assyrian king named the sum; Hezekiah paid it; of course, with the implied pledge on the part of Sennacherib that he would return home. This pledge he faithlessly broke, and sent forward Rabshakeh at once with a great host against Jerusalem.—"He hath despised the cities," making no account of the fortified cities that lay in his path. None of them were strong enough to occasion him any considerable delay. He cared not for them. The history states that in the outset, "he came up against all the



fenced cities of Judah and took them" (2 Kings 18: 13). That "he regardeth no man" may look either to his contempt for all other human interests save his own, or to his recklessness of human life. Selfish ambition was his master passion and utterly precluded all proper regard for the interests of others.

9. The earth mourneth *and* languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed *and* hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off *their* fruits.

This group of figures represents all nature as afflicted, depressed and desolate, to give the reader an idea of the state of the kingdom and people on the eve of being (to human view) utterly crushed before the resistless power of Assyria. Lebanon is filled with shame and grief over the loss of her beauty. The second verb means, not "hewn down," but *withered*—her magnificent foliage dead. That all these expressions are figurative is made the more sure by the fact that the places specified lie outside of Judea and would not therefore be in the literal sense damaged by this invasion; or if they were, it would be a matter of no special concern to the Jews.

10. Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

The thrice repeated *now* shows where the emphasis lies. The time has already come for the mighty God to arouse himself and signally glorify his name in overthrowing this proud and cruel king.

11. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.

12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

This is God's declaration concerning the Assyrians. Chaff and stubble of course betoken an utter abortion, a terribly disastrous failure. An analogous figure appears, chap. 26: 18.—In the clause, "Your breath as fire shall devour you," some take "breath" in the sense of anger. Your anger against God's people shall destroy you. It is doubtful whether the Hebrew word can well bear this sense. I prefer to translate; "Your animus, the spirit that impels you," etc. This shall (so to speak) produce spontaneous combustion, as sometimes happens when the tissues of the human system become saturated with alcohol. —All the nations that array themselves against the Almighty shall become lime-kilns, to burn before the fire he kindles upon

them. As thorns cut up and consequently dried, so shall they be consumed. These various forms of destruction by fire are of course figures to represent that swift, terrible, resistless ruin with which God swept the Assyrian host.

13. Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done; and, ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

Now the deed is done; the destroying angel has been there; and the Lord calls on all people, near or far, to note what he has done and to recognize his power.

14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

The "sinners in Zion" are the wicked who were in Jerusalem. It became them to take warning, for God had come very near to them in awful majesty. How could they look on such demonstrations of his wrath against great sinners without trembling! The word translated "hypocrites" (as observed in notes on chap. 10: 6) denotes more properly sinners of aggravated character. The clause should rather be read, *consternation has seized upon hardened sinners!*—The questions that follow are put by these wicked Jews of Jerusalem in view of a judgment so appalling before their very eyes. "Who of us," living so near to such a God, and more guilty than even the Assyrians, "shall dwell with the devouring fire," of which these fires of God (vs. 11, 12) on the Assyrians are a symbol? "Who of us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" For if the burnings of divine judgment for one night are so fearful, who shall abide them when they burn forever? This is manifestly the spirit of these interrogations. Who can say that their logic is not appropriate and even resistless? O, how can any sinner in his sins evade their application to himself, or resist their solemn appeal? They assume (why should they not?) that the judgments of God on guilty nations fairly represent the spirit of divine retributions for sin in general, and therefore give us the data from which to infer the judgments of God on individual sinners in the world to come, where only we can rationally locate the real and full retributions of justice upon sinners in their individual character and relations.—Commenting on this passage Dr. Alexander takes the following notice of a German criticism which has found some writers in this country to accept it. "Knobel says the burning was called *everlasting* because it was everlasting in its consequences, *i. e.*, it destroyed what it consumed *forever*. But who would or could speak in any language of a man's being

hung with an *everlasting* rope or killed with an *everlasting* stroke of lightning?" Who would call the fires of a furnace everlasting, meaning by this only that they would destroy human life in two minutes past the possibility of restoration?—Hence by the laws of language, everlasting fire is fire that burns and *is* fire forever—the word everlasting denoting the duration of the fire and not the duration of its effects or consequences.

15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16. He shall dwell on high; his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure.

V. 15 is by no means an answer to the question in v. 14, designed to show *who* could endure everlasting burnings, but rather describes the man who shall *escape* them—the man who dwells on high and in safety, as said in v. 16. The wicked have one doom; the righteous another. The doom of the former is set forth as inconceivably awful; the latter under illustrative images of peace, safety, abundance, blessedness.—This description of the good man is strong on the points most distinctive of upright character in those times. He “shakes his hand from holding bribes” as one who would thrust away every such temptation with loathing and disgust. “Hearing of blood” refers to plots for taking life. He will hearken to no such proposal. He “shuts his eyes from seeing evil” in the sense of conniving at it or enjoying it.—He shall be on high from all danger, like one within a lofty castle on a mountain of rock, with bread and water enough there to banish all fear of famine. Such places of security were highly valued in those times of war and devastation, and hence were then a lively image of God’s sure protection of his people and of their distinctive blessedness.

17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

The pious in Jerusalem rejoice over the ruin of the Assyrian army. Again they shall see their king in his beauty (no longer, as of late, in sackcloth and tears). They shall behold the land to a great distance, as contrasted with being closely shut up within the walls of Jerusalem. Now they go abroad far as they choose in safety. Practically their country is to them greatly enlarged, which is a rich blessing.

18. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the

scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

The sense is, Thou shalt reflect upon the *past* terror when the enemy were approaching and thou wert saying, Where is the military officer who musters the army, the adjutant-general? Where is the paymaster? And where the engineer? All eyes were then looking toward the army and the military defenses of the city.

19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst not understand.*

But now, how changed the scene. Thou shalt no more see that fierce people, obstinate, strong and merciless, the Assyrians; of language unknown to thee, and hence too deep to be heard intelligently (Heb.). All speaking in an unknown tongue seems to be stammering. Thou shalt hear their jargon no more.

20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that shall not be taken down*; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

Now, instead of looking out upon that savage host as they approach nearer and nearer to the city, we may look calmly upon our beloved Zion, the city of our solemn assemblies, the yearly sacred festivals. Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet abode; or according to the modes of nomadic life, a *tent*, yet not one that is to be struck for removal each week or each month, but one that shall not be taken down; none of its stakes (the tent-pins) shall be torn up, nor its cords broken. The sacred city is to stand unharmed by her fierce and bloody foes, a living type of the ever-enduring church of God, against which no weapon forged by wicked hands shall prosper.

21. But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

The original favors a slightly different construction, yet without materially changing the sense, thus: "But there Jehovah shall be glorious as to us, a place of rivers and streams, broad on both hands (as the Euphrates and the Nile); yet through it shall pass no galley with oars, nor shall any gallant ship pass thereby." The word for "gallant" is the same which is translated "glorious" as applied in the first clause to Jehovah. The figure represents Jehovah as being to Jerusalem what the

great Euphrates was to Babylon or the Nile to Thebes—its glory, beauty and wealth; yet with this remarkable exception, that it should open no avenue for an armed foe to approach by water. The war vessels of ancient times are described here—a galley with oars, and a gallant ship proudly bearing its implements of death.

22. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our law-giver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

This verse translates the figures of the two verses previous into literal language. The Lord, our King and Lawgiver, holding us while obedient under his perfect protection, is pre-eminently our glory and strength.

23. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

Recurring to the war-galley and the gallant ship of the enemy, as in v. 21, the prophet accosts this ideal enemy, "Thy tacklings (the ropes and stays of the vessel) are cast loose: they (the sailors) can not make the base of their mast strong; they can not spread their sails. Then shall the booty of the spoil be divided abundantly; even the lame pillage the spoil." The prophet had said that no proud war vessel should come into the waters of Jerusalem; but now it strikes him there has been one exception. Sennacherib had moored his gallant ship there. So here he sketches her fate. That even the lame should join in the plunder evinces both the general eagerness and also the safety with which the Assyrian camp was pillaged.

24. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall* be forgiven *their* iniquity.

All is well in the holy city. The allusion to the "lame" may have suggested that now and onward, in these better days of Zion, none shall say, "I am sick." None are disabled, none are suffering. Blessedness is the common lot—rich, deep and pure, for this figure can mean nothing less. The people who dwell there are forgiven; their sins and iniquities are remembered no more.—Plainly this deliverance from the Assyrian foe suggests the far more perfect redemption wrought by Immanuel for his people, and gives us here an outlook into the rich spiritual life and joy of gospel and perhaps even of Millennial times. It is indeed supposable that the passage may contemplate the great fact that the sufferings of our world come of its sin, so that when sin shall have entirely disappeared, suffering

will cease also—a result reserved for a state in which mortality has no place. Yet since the word here is “forgiven,” expressing a fact of our present world; and is not, *made absolutely sinless*—a fact of the future world only; the reference to Millennial purity and peace is the more probable.



#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

THIS chapter and the next sustain mutual relations to each other; this, a broadly comprehensive view of God's judgments on guilty nations, of which Idumea is an instance and an illustration; and the next, a corresponding view of God's blessings upon his people. The nations judged and punished in this chapter are contemplated as the bitter and determined enemies of God and of his people; so that the exterminating judgments sent on them and the restoring mercies sent on his people are parts of the same divine policy, manifestations of one and the same divine Father, promoting the great ends of righteousness and well-being. The same contrast in deeds and in destiny is strongly put in two contiguous verses (chap. 3: 10, 11): “Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” The same good Father, because he is good and because he rules justly, awards to each class its destiny according to its doings and deserts. So in these two contiguous chapters, first the wicked, next the righteous, have their destiny portrayed.—Idumea is fitly selected to represent the enemies of Israel, the national antipathy having begun with Esau, the father of the nation, and having been nursed through all generations. Amos says of Edom: “He did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear” [tiger-like] “perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever” (chap. 1: 11). Here divine retribution manifests itself in his condign punishment. In his doom let the inveterate enemies of Christ's kingdom read and forecast their own!—Let it also be noted that these two chapters (34 and 35) naturally close the series which began with chap. 13, grouping together the prophecies of Isaiah against idolatrous nations with whom the Jews came in contact, including also the kingdom of the ten tribes, and indeed, the southern kingdom as well so far forth as that kingdom was in apostasy and rebellion against God. In the portions that relate to Judah

and Jerusalem, promises alternate with threatenings, indicating God's thoughts of mercy and his purpose in regard to them to reclaim and save. But in the main this series of prophecies makes the judgments of God on wicked nations its central theme, and in this point of view, it naturally culminates in the chapter now before us.—In point of fearfulness and appalling grandeur, these images of destruction and desolation are unsurpassed. Who can translate these figures into the reality which they legitimately represent, and then grasp the dread facts without shuddering!

1. Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

As usual with the prophet when any specially solemn and fearful announcement is to be made, he summons all earth to give attention. The call is to all the people and nations of the wide world. Critics raise the inquiry whether "all that is therein," and "all things that come forth of it," look to the unintelligent animal creation and to inanimate matter. All that need be said on this point is that, if the prophet contemplates the latter, it is due to his poetic imagination which, for the moment, gives life and thought to all material forms, and therefore summons them to hear what Jehovah is about to say. This bold poetic costume only shows how intensely the prophet felt, and how strongly it seemed to him that everything in nature as well as every being that has intelligence ought to give ear to these solemn words from the great God.

2. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

The reason why the world should hear is that the Lord Jehovah is angry with all the nations and is about to punish them in righteous severity. "Their armies" is literally *their hosts*, with allusion probably to their having arrayed themselves for battle against himself and his people. Obviously it is only as his open and stubborn enemies that He comes down upon them in his righteous displeasure to destroy them.—The Hebrew rendered, "has destroyed," means has consecrated them by his irrevocable vow to destruction. *Doomed* is the nearest English equivalent.

3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

"Their slain" is precisely their mortally wounded. They are cast out unburied, to become putrid upon the face of the earth—a doom which involved the highest dishonor, and which by rendering the densely peopled portions unfit for human abode, foretokened depopulation and utter waste.—"Mountains melted with their blood," seems to have in view the case of hills washed away by torrents of rain, the loose matter dissolved and borne off by the powerful flood. Of course the language is hyperbolical—a deluge of human blood!

4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig tree.

These bold figures seem to suppose first that the stars and planets lose their solidity, *i. e.*, deliquesce; become fluid, as the first stage toward disappearing and going out in darkness; and then that they drop from their places in the concave sphere as the leaf falls in autumn or the fig in the time of harvest.—The rolling together of the heavens as a scroll, parchment, or map, is rolled up, is the natural counterpart to the figure which appears both in Psalms 104: 2, and in Isaiah 40: 22: "That stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, and spreadest them out as a tent to dwell in." Reversing the process to indicate a general dissolution of the frame-work of nature, the poetic conception would be; who rolls up this outspread curtain to lay it away. God's terrible judgments upon the nations of men, sweeping them away into the gulf of doom, are thought of as changing the face of the earth, even as rolling up the curtain of the visible heavens and laying it aside would change the whole aspect of the blue concave above us.

5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

The future tense, "*shall be bathed*," is neither appropriate to the context nor true to the original which has the past tense, *has been bathed* in heaven. The poetic conception is that of a sword already in anticipation saturated with the blood of its enemies. The same verb is used (v. 7) of their land, "soaked" (saturated) "with blood." Of course, thus saturated and filled [fired we might say] with the spirit of a just and righteous retribution, what should it do but leap forth from heaven and come down upon Idumea and the people of Jehovah's curse, to execute condign judgment! The imagination of the prophet gives the sword not only life but a moral sense; the impulses of a right-



bution.—As said above, Idumea represents not itself the ancient Edom—but all the malign, persistent, incorrigible enemies of God and of his earthly kingdom.

The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is girded with fatness, *and* with the blood of lambs and with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD has sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

In this poetic figure, the sword is here a beast or bird of prey, insatiable, thirsting for blood, and satiating itself upon its prey. The point to be illustrated is the vastness of the slaughter and the terribleness of the doom visited upon these rebels and enemies of his throne. The figure should by no means be pressed forcibly so as to signify that God delights in blood and feasts himself upon his slaughtered foes in the midst of a malign exultation over their fall. Utterly far from justice does indeed cut down the guilty, yet only because *must*; only because the highest good of the great kingdom of Jehovah can not be secured without such punishment.—The “Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah,” in the midst of a vast slaughter. Bozrah is equivalent to Idumea, one of its cities representing the whole country.

And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bulls with the bulls; and their land shall be made fat with blood, and their dust made fat with fat-

animals here named are said to *come down*, either as gathering the rest to this great slaughter, or as falling before the power of the destroyers; probably the former primarily; but by implication. They come down to the place of slaughter to be slain there.—The word rendered “unicorn” by the common consent of the best authorities, is not any unicorn, or wild buffalo of Western Asia, then a fierce and somewhat formidable animal, well known in Palestine.—“Bulls” is identical with “bullocks;” the former word however is often used for the animal when young, and generally as a word for sacrifice; while the word for bullock indicates strength and courage. The fierce “bulls of Bashan” are used by David to symbolize his malign and powerful enemies (2): “Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls have beset me round.”

8. For *it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.*

Here is the reason for this immense slaughter. The time has come for the Lord to bring retribution upon the guilty, persistent enemies of his kingdom. The word "controversy" is somewhat ambiguous. In this passage it must mean, for the *cause* of Zion. The time has come for God to interpose in behalf of Zion and call her enemies to a solemn account and to deserved retribution. The original word is often used for a case litigated in court. So here, the Lord comes down to sit on his throne of judgment and adjudicate the case between his people and their foes.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

10. It shall not be quenched night or day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

By a new figure the prophet sets before us Idumea burning, after the manner of ancient Sodom, its rivers converted to pitch and its dust to brimstone, and one all-imbosoming conflagration covering the whole land and utterly refusing to be extinguished. In this description, the language is obviously drawn from the case of the doomed cities of the plain and is therefore figurative. —The results—the country lying waste from generation to generation and no traveler passing through it for ever—have been wonderfully verified for many ages past and are so still. It would not be easy to find on the face of our globe a spot ever inhabited by man that is now so utterly desolate as this same Idumea, or one as to which there is so much testimony to show that for ages "no man has passed through it." The latter fact is more remarkable because when Isaiah wrote and for some centuries subsequently, its capital, Petra, was a great thoroughfare of travel and of commerce. Volney said of it, "The country has not been visited by any traveler, but it well merits such an attention." (Travels vol. 2: 344.) Burckhardt spake of it as "a desert where no traveler had ever before been seen." [Travels in Syria page 421.] Seetzen says, "A route never before accomplished."

11. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall

stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

Having said that human beings shall not dwell there, the prophet carefully names the animals that shall. Much critical labor has been expended to determine precisely the animals represented by these names and with various degrees of certainty in the result.—The word for “cormorant” probably means “the vomiter,” a description which applies to the pelican and his natural pouch. The fact that the cormorant and the pelican are naturally sea-birds, constituted for getting their food out of shallow water, raises some doubt whether these designations of animals were intended to be specific. The general fact that wild birds abound in the ruins of Edom is most abundantly attested by travelers. Mangles while at Petra describes the screaming of the eagles, hawks, and owls, seemingly annoyed at any one approaching their lonely habitation. (Alexander). Perhaps the prophet purposed to affirm only this general fact.—The “bittern” *rolls himself up*, and hence is probably the porcupine, otherwise called the hedgehog. The word for “owl” probably denotes the heron or crane—this conclusion resting on the sort of cry which distinguishes that bird and is indicated in his name. The words for “confusion” and “emptiness” are the same which describe old chaos, in Gen. 1: 2, as being “without form and void.” The “line” [measuring line] and the “stones” or plummet assume that God lays out the work for destruction as the builder lays out his for construction. He has purposed and will do it, as the builder makes his plan and applies his line and plummet to carry it into effect.

12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none *shall be* there, and her princes shall do nothing.

Critics have differed very considerably in their construction of this very difficult passage. The English version seems to me the best yet offered. In harmony with the context which represents the land as utterly void of men and peopled only with such animals as dwell in the most dismal solitudes, this verse must be taken as a way of saying, not that there was an actual call from the people to their princes to assume the reins of government, but that there was neither government, princes, nor people to call them. The government “goes a begging” and finds no people to care for it.

13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be a habitation of dragons, *and* a court for owls.

Instead of "owls" the marginal reading "ostriches," is now generally adopted. Instead of dragons some prefer jackals; others, wolves. The "thorns" and "brambles" witness to the utter desolation of her great cities.

14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

If we retain the translation, "wild beasts of the island," it will refer to those that frequent marshes, wet places, in contrast with those that live in deserts, dry places. The Hebrew word gives the idea of *howlers*, animals designated by their hideous yells.—The "satyr" appears among the animals of ruined Babylon (chap. 13: 21). See notes there. Both this word and the next (translated "screech-owl") have been supposed to denote ideal monsters, the creatures of popular superstition; and this construction has been seized upon by critics unfriendly to the reputation of the Jews and to the credit of their Scriptures as implying that they were a weak, superstitious people. But really there is no evidence which renders it even probable that these words are used by Isaiah for ideal objects of superstition. The Hebrew word for "satyr" means a rough he-goat, or more generally animals specially *shaggy* in their appearance. The next word, rendered better in the margin "night-monsters," means by its etymology, *animals of the night*—more active by night than by day. These animals moreover are represented as seeking and finding here a place of rest. Dr. Alexander forcibly suggests that this circumstance is entirely adverse to the notion of their being mere ghosts, objects that exist only as the creation of a weak superstition, since all such beings are supposed to be restless, never still.

15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

This "great owl" is supposed to be the arrow snake, so called from his coiling himself up and springing forward in his ordinary locomotion. This sort of movement is indicated by the etymology of the word.—The verse represents this animal as propagating its kind and re-producing itself there as its permanent home. The same must be assumed of all the rest. Man is no longer a resident there. These animals have superseded him and made it their fixed abode.

16. Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read:

o one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate : for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

This is obviously addressed to those who should live in the distant future and could compare the prophecy with its fulfillment. The prophet invites them to this comparison. Assuming that his own prophetic writings—this prophecy against Edom among the rest—are in “the book of the Lord,” he calls upon men in the remote ages to look up this prophecy and read it, and then carefully compare it with the facts of the case. Let them go to the land of ancient Edom and note if it be not deserted of men and fully held in possession by those races of animals which by their instincts live where men do not. These seem to be the staple facts to which the prophet appeals. True, his language seems naturally to affirm that the identical species which he has named will be found there. Yet in view of the extreme difficulty of identifying precisely the animals he has named, it ought to suffice if it shall appear that men are not there and that the animals which shun the abodes of men and love the most dreary solitudes and wastes are there.—For through my mouth as a prophet God has commanded, and his Spirit, his active agencies, have brought these animals here and so fulfilled the words of this prediction.—The passage thus shows us that the prophets were fully conscious that their prophecies were given them of God, and that they expected them to be preserved for the use of future ages in “the book of the Lord,” and confronted with the facts of history in due time.

17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line : they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

The Lord had given them their definite location and homes here even as he settled the tribes of Israel in Canaan, dividing the land by line and then casting lots for the special location of each tribe.—So perish the enemies of God. The desolate land of Edom is a standing witness at this day, not merely of the truth and accuracy of this prophecy, but of the fearfulness of the doom which God visits upon the nation that distinguishes itself by its hostility to his own people, and in a yet broader sense, of the fearfulness of that final doom which awaits every persistent rebel in the world of retribution.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

As said in the introduction to chap. 34, this chapter stands over against that; this giving the joyful changes which God achieves for his people: that, the woeful changes of ruin and desolation which God brings upon his incorrigible enemies. The central idea of this chapter is the wealth of God's resources for blessing those who trust in him, and the consequent richness and glory of those blessings. The change wrought in those who find mercy and rest in God is like that of a barren and waste wilderness becoming verdant and blooming; the blind restored to sight; the deaf to hearing; the lame to leaping and the dumb to songs again; sandy deserts bursting forth with bubbling fountains; a glorious highway for Zion's pilgrims over what was only a waste of pathless sands before, upon which highway no dangerous beasts should ever ascend—none but God's redeemed, and they, with songs and everlasting joy.—It has been well said that the tenor of this description is so general and comprehensive that it may be applied to Israel returning from her long captivity in Babylon; to the calling of the Gentiles and to their great joy in the gospel; to the Christian dispensation as revealing more richly than ever before the love of God and the power of his Spirit; to the experience of every true convert to Christ; and to the perfect bliss of heaven.

1. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

The words "for them," are quite indefinite, their sense not being clear, either in themselves, or from the context. The original is, if possible, even more obscure than the English version. Some apply the words to the judgment and ruin of the wicked as given in the previous chapter. I prefer to apply them to the joyful changes to be wrought in the desert, as described in this. The desert and the dry place shall be glad for the transformation which God will make in their state—from a dreary waste to a blooming paradise.

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto

the excellency of Carmel and Sharon ; they shall see the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God.

"It" (the wilderness) "shall blossom abundantly." The imagination of the poet gives life and emotion to this desert—late a waste; now all verdant and beautiful—for it now rejoices even in joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon (not *shall be*, but) *has been* given to it; and herein lies this surprising change. The final is in the preter tense.—"*They*" (who shall see the glory of the Lord) is made somewhat emphatic in the Hebrew, and is to include all who are present, or perhaps all the intelligent angels, the living men who are poetically represented in the con-  
by deserts clothed with beauty and verdure. All these shall be the manifestations of God's glory; his power to save and the deep love of his heart, out of which all salvation flows.

3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

In this verse the original words for "weak" and "feeble" are adjectives but participles, and therefore involve a special reference to *time*, describing not a permanent but a temporary state of weakness or disability—those whose hands are now weak and whose knees now feeble and tottering. Encourage such with assurances that God is near at hand with great blessings.—Paul (Heb. 12) uses this figure—"Lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees"—an exhortation rather to self-encouragement than to the encouraging of others. Isaiah's words admit of either interpretation. See also Job 4 : 3, 4.

4. Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, even he *will* with a recompense; he will come and save you.

The "fearful of heart" are the hasty who can not wait patiently for the apparently slow movements of God; who are impatient with his long delay in fulfilling his promises. Say to all, "Be strong in heart; fear not. Behold your God! Vengeance shall come, the recompenses of God; he himself will come and save you." This construction of the verse conforms more closely to the original than the English version and is more expressive.—Let the saints have patience and never fear lest God should forget his words of promise, or the interests of his people and kingdom. He will vindicate himself as true to his words, and of threatening against his foes and of promise in behalf of his friends.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6. Then shall the lame *man* leap as a hart, and the

tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

The figures change, but the general sense remains the same. The precious deliverance wrought by the Lord for his people is analogous to that of the blind restored to sight; the deaf to hearing; the dumb to singing, and the lame to their powers of leaping and walking. It is remarkable how closely the actual life of the Lord Jesus on earth corresponds to these figures. For the double purpose of giving scope to the gushing benevolence of his heart, and of illustrating his power to save souls from sin, he heard the prayer of the blind for sight, and of the deaf for their lost hearing, and thus made his miracles perpetual illustrations of what his grace was ready and mighty to do in giving spiritual sight to spiritually blind eyes and spiritual life to spiritually dead souls.—In the last clause of v. 6, the tense of the original is better expressed thus: "For in the wilderness waters *have broken out* (not "shall break out"). Because fountains *have* broken out there, verdure will ensue. This verse recalls the figure of the desert, virtually blending it with the new one—the restored senses of sight and hearing.

7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall* be grass with reeds and rushes.

The word rendered "parched ground," has a more definite sense which gives exquisite beauty as well as great force to the figure. It is used for a certain illusive appearance of water far in the distance over the desert sands which has often tantalized thirsty travelers, only to aggravate their disappointment. It is best known by the French name of "*the mirage*," and is occasioned by the peculiar refraction of the sun's rays passing over the sands of the desert, giving the distant horizon precisely the appearance of a vast lake. Hence the meaning here is that this deceitful mirage shall become really a pool of water, and bubbling springs shall burst forth in the very desert,—which in that climate would clothe regions otherwise wasted and desolate, with magnificent verdure and beauty.—The last verse admits of being read as in the English version, supplying the verb "*shall be*;" or as a continued description of the desert, thus: "In the dwelling place of wolves, their lair—a place (or court) for reeds and rushes." In either construction the sense is that the dry regions, useless except for the lair of wolves, shall become moist enough for reeds and rushes; a great change from an arid desert. Now the labor of man and the blessing of God will make it a paradise.

8. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall



not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.

A new figure still appears. We have seen the great Sahara, putting on the glory of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon; her desolate and scorching sands blooming with roses and even pouring forth her new joy in song; the mirage becoming pools of living water; moisture and consequent verdure succeeding to sterility and vast desolation; but here this trackless desert and its vast waste of drifting, pathless sands is cut by a *highway*—a road well cast up and fitted for rapid and easy travel. It shall be called, *i. e.*, shall really *be*, the way of holiness, a new road made to bear men safely, high above the quicksands of temptation and the dreary wastes of sin. The unclean go not there. The clause, "It shall be for those," with this construction, means, It shall be for the people of God alone for whom it was built. Another construction is possible, reading, not "it," but "he," *i. e.*, God, "shall be with them." The English margin has this meaning. Either sense is good. The former is probably the true sense, being most directly in the strain of the context. An allusion to "God's" presence with them, if made, would have been more full and definite.—The last clause means that travelers, even though of only ordinary intelligence, shall not miss the road. With honest hearts, though of only very moderate knowledge, this highway is very readily followed. The way of salvation is traveled safely by some who are only babes and children in understanding, so that intellectual mediocrity, whether due to nature or to lack of culture, need not exclude men from the blessings of salvation.

9. No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*:

To complete the picture, dangerous wild beasts are excluded altogether from this highway. It might be never so well prepared; never so fine a road for travel; and yet be every where exposed to lions or vipers. But God provides against all dangers. There shall be nothing there to hurt or destroy. This blessed pathway is reserved for the redeemed alone and is made safe for them against all evil.

10. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Those who are purchased with redeeming blood, bought off from their bondage to sin by a redemption as of captives, shall return from the prisons and the exiles of their captivity and come even to Zion, the very abode of the living God. They come more-

over with songs, their hearts full of praise, and their tongues warbling sweet melody in honor of their Great Deliverer. "Everlasting joy upon their heads," is said probably with allusion to the fact that the great symbols of joy, honor and dignity, were usually worn upon the head, *e. g.*, the anointing oil; the crown of royalty; the chaplet of honor. So these saints shall wear upon their heads the symbols of everlasting joy.—The two last clauses might fitly be read, "Joy and gladness shall overtake them—meet them and abide with them; while sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The mutual correlation is shown best in this construction. As to them, all good shall *come*; all evil shall *go*. The good shall seek and find them; the evil shall flee away and return no more! O blessed fruition! What has not the glorious gospel achieved for the lost of our race! What a wealth of blessedness yet remains to be realized in the extension of the gospel over the vast moral deserts of our world, and in lifting the church to a higher plane of Christian life; or in the figures of Isaiah, in building up the great highway of holiness, and in bringing the ransomed ones of God to walk there and there only, all through their earthly pilgrimage to their heavenly rest.—In A. D. 1714, the great and good Vitranga devoutly closed his comments on this first portion of Isaiah's prophecies, thus: "Unite with me in prayer, imploring the Lord to fulfill all this propitiously in his own time. Meanwhile, he that believeth shall not make haste."

The salvation of Zion is nearer now than then. Many an oasis is already opened in the great Sahara of the heathen world. Many a spot has been reclaimed from its sterile wasteness and has begun to blossom as the rose. In the wilderness have living waters burst forth and streams in the desert. Many eyes blind from their birth among nations enshrouded in darkness since the world began, have opened to the joyous light of heaven. The word of God resounds in languages which never gave utterance to the great and blessed thoughts of God before. And yet the work of reclaiming to God a perishing world is mostly waiting to be done. It waits (O how earnestly!) with what imploring calls, invitingly moreover, with everything to encourage, and the promise of God firm as the everlasting mountains, that this result is in his plan, is dear to his heart, and sure of ultimate accomplishment! Let no Christian lose his faith in God!



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE four chapters that commence here (chaps. 36–39) are

purely historical, yet are fitly introduced here to lay before the reader some vastly important events of the life and reign of Hezekiah, especially the circumstances connected with the destruction of Sennacherib's army, *e. g.*, the negotiations and speeches of that king's envoy; the spirit of the effort; the attitude of Hezekiah; his prayer, and God's answer sent by the prophet Isaiah. All these points sustain vital relations to that signal interposition of God for the destruction of the Assyrian host. This event had been so often predicted, or otherwise referred to in the prophetic portions of this book; was so grand in itself, so significant and impressive, and so correlated to the great reformation which had been wrought under the efforts of the king and his associates, that it could by no means be suffered to go down to posterity denuded of these antecedent circumstances. All these words of Rabshakeh and prayers of Hezekiah were vital to the full moral impression which that grand event was designed to make. Hence two chapters (36 and 37) are wisely devoted to this subject.—The two next chapters record the sickness and threatened death of Hezekiah; his prayer for longer life together with God's propitious answer; the king's thanksgiving ode; and the embassy of the king of Babylon sent to inquire respecting this remarkable prolongation of his life. This embassy developed the king's vanity and ensnared him into the display of all his treasures, for which the Lord revealed to him the future captivity of his people to Babylon and the extreme degradation and suffering of his royal house under that rising power.—The history standing in these four chapters appears in nearly the same form in 2 Kings 18–20, Isaiah 36 and 37 being slightly less full than the corresponding portions in Kings; while on the contrary, the remaining points of the history are in some respects more full in Isaiah than in Kings. In regard to the authorship of these collateral histories, the best theory is that they are both the work of Isaiah—the one written for the historic records of the nation; the other prepared for this book of prophecies as we find it. Some time may have intervened between the writing of the one and the other, and this may account for the diversities. It is well known that Isaiah wrote portions of the historic records of his nation, *e. g.*, the life of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26: 22), and of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 33: 22). None can doubt that he wrote these historic chapters. Both the resemblances and the differences of these two narratives are easily accounted for upon this highly probable supposition.—The narrative in 2 Chron. 32, differs very considerably from either of these; omitting much; condensing some of the points which it introduces, yet bringing out some new matter. It can scarcely be doubted that this account is of later date and purposely supplementary to the other two. There is abundant reason to conclude that the books of Chronicles were chiefly compiled by Ezra and his associates, the matter, whether original or selected, being adapted

to certain moral purposes which were then of paramount importance to the recently restored exiles.

1. Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

Of the two great central events in these four chapters; the destruction of the Assyrians and the sickness of Hezekiah, it is not easy to determine absolutely from any historic data which was first in time. If we assume the correctness of the chronological dates in these chapters, it is quite certain that they came very near together; probably within the same year. The important data are that Hezekiah reigned twenty-nine years (2 Kings 18: 2); that after this sickness he lived (and reigned) fifteen years (Isaiah 38: 5, and 2 Kings 20: 6), and consequently had reigned fourteen already; and the point made in the verse before us which locates the advance of Sennacherib upon Jerusalem in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. There being no important counter testimony, it is safe to accept the promise made to Hezekiah (chapter 38: 6) as practically deciding in favor of the priority of the sickness, since the Lord couples with the promise of fifteen more years, that of deliverance from Assyria. "And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city." It is scarcely supposable that this would have been said *after* the great catastrophe.—Assuming that the sickness was prior to the fall of the Assyrian, the latter may have been put first in order as being naturally connected with the antecedent prophecies; and on the other hand, the sickness last in order as being in like manner connected with the visit of the embassy from Babylon, and that, with the allusions to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon through the aid of Cyrus as set forth in chapters 44 and 45.—In this view of the order of priority in these two events, one prominent reason why Hezekiah should so earnestly desire longer life might be found in the imperiled state of his kingdom. He could not bear to be taken from his people while they were exposed to this peril. It is true that he makes no allusion to this in his prayer—perhaps for the reason that it was sufficiently obvious without mention.

At this stage, some notice should be taken of the theory warmly advocated by George Rawlinson and thought by him to be demanded by a large amount of historical evidence brought to light in the annals of the Assyrian and Chaldean kings, and quite essential in order to harmonize that evidence with this scriptural narrative. He holds that Sennacherib made two distinct expeditions into Judea, each of which had Egypt for its main ultimate object; the first about B. C. 700, in the twenty-seventh year of Hezekiah, and the second in B. C. 698 within Hezekiah's last year. These

dates are later by at least thirteen years than that given in the Hebrew text of 2 Kings 18: 13, and Isaiah 36: 1; those passages assigning the first invasion to Hezekiah's fourteenth year; this theory, to his twenty-seventh. Of course the theory involves the supposition of an error to this amount in the Hebrew text.—The reasons assigned by Mr. Rawlinson for a second expedition as opposed to the theory of only one are—(1.) The apparent indications of two series of events, both in 2 Kings 18: 13 and 17, and in 2 Chron. 32: 1 and 9. (2.) The improbability of a hostile attack upon Jerusalem immediately after the payment of a large tribute. (3.) The fall of Lachish on the first invasion; its apparent escape on the second. (4.) The improbability that national vanity would go the length of seeking to conceal an enormous disaster (the ruin of his army) under cover of the proudest boasts. (5.) The impossibility of a triumphant return to Nineveh with two hundred thousand captives, immediately after the loss of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in one night, and in the midst of the consequent panic and flight of his surviving forces.—The reader will observe in this argument the allusion to the Assyrian annals which seem to testify to an immense number of captives as well as an enormous booty brought from Judea to Nineveh as the result of Sennacherib's invasion. See the record in full in my notes on Isaiah 10: 24.—The last point in Mr. Rawlinson's argument, which is really his strongest, is mostly set aside by the supposition that he sent home these captives and this spoil immediately after he had taken them, and some time before his great disaster.

But it will be asked, Why locate these expeditions so late in the reign of Hezekiah, in opposition to the Hebrew text which places the first in his fourteenth year?—Mr. R. claims that the late date is necessary in order to harmonize the scriptural narrative with the dates of the Assyrian kings as obtained from various and valuable sources. These sources comprise not only Assyrian but Chaldean monuments and inscriptions, together with the canon of Ptolemy. By the testimony of all these documents Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, began to reign in the very year in which Samaria was taken which was the sixth year of Hezekiah. He reigned at least fifteen years and according to some important authorities, nineteen. The Assyrian records assign the first invasion of Judah by Sennacherib to his [Sennacherib's] third year. Accepting the longer period for the reign of Sargon, the third year of Sennacherib his son will be the twenty-seventh year of Hezekiah.—To account for the assumed error in the Hebrew text (36: 1), it is supposed that some transcriber inferred from the statement (Isaiah 38: 1) that Hezekiah's sickness was very near the time of Sennacherib's invasion, and therefore took the liberty to modify the text to suit this inference. I am exceedingly reluctant to admit the fact of such a change in the Hebrew text.—It

may be properly suggested that the account in 2 Chron. 32: 1 does not name the year of Hezekiah's reign, but says, "after these things" (connected with that great religious reformation) "and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib came up" etc. This implies that the reformation was completed and that this new order of things had become settled. But the reformation began in his first year. This form of statement corresponds well to his fourteenth year, but by no means so well with his twenty-seventh.—I have thought it due to the reader to present these recent theories which are certainly worthy of respectful consideration on account of their connection with the recently developed antiquities of Assyria.—The subject needs more light.

2. And the King of Assyria sent Rabskakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto King Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

In the corresponding history (2 Kings 18: 13), three additional verses occur between vs. 1 and 2, as they stand here. They state that Hezekiah sent a message to the king of Assyria, then at Lachish, confessing his wrong in his recent revolt, and declaring his readiness to pay any amount of tribute which the king should demand. The king fixed this sum at three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold, and Hezekiah gave him all the silver found in the temple; all he had in his own treasury, and even cut off the gold from the doors of the temple and from its pillars, and gave it to the king of Assyria. It is not said whether this was less or more than the king of Assyria demanded. If the allusions in chap. 33: 7, 8 are explained correctly, he was supposed to be in honor bound to withdraw, since the prophet represents him as having "broken his covenant" in pushing forward after having received this money as the penalty prescribed by himself for Hezekiah's offense. But rapacity knows no limit short of all it can possibly get. So Sennacherib struck for conquest and plunder, and Hezekiah set himself to defend his city and to seek help from God.—But if we can accept the theory of two distinct invasions, then the Assyrian took this tribute and spoil in abundance besides, and went home—only to return after some two years in hope of more pillage.—Lachish, now under siege, lay south-west from Jerusalem, on the way to Egypt.—Hezekiah had gone out where Ahaz also went when the city was threatened with siege (chap. 7: 3), to secure the city fountains and prevent their falling into the hands of an enemy. The supplementary narrative (2 Chron. 32: 2-4, 30), gives a more full account of this precautionary provision for supplying the city with water and cutting off this supply from their enemies.

3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son,

which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

Eliakim appears here in the office formerly held by Shebna, according to the prophecy, chap. 22: 15-25. These men were deputies for Hezekiah.

4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

While Rabshakeh scornfully refuses to give Hezekiah the title of king, he spreads himself to the utmost in titling his own master, "the great king," "the king of Assyria."—The spirit of his question is, on what are you relying that you should refuse to surrender and prefer to stand a siege?

5. I say, *sayest thou* (but *they are but* vain words) *I have* counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

A more direct construction, requiring fewer italic (supplied) words, is possible, thus: "I say, mere lip-words are [your] counsel and strength for war." This supposes Rabshakeh to speak in his own person and not in theirs. The sense is, all your wisdom and all your strength for war are mere talk; empty boasts; nothing more.

6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

This forcible figure supposes the staff already broken and its slivered sharp points ready to pierce the hand under the pressure of leaning upon it. There is no historical evidence that Hezekiah had been trusting in Egypt, although his wicked father had done so before him. Yet it was a natural supposition for an Assyrian to make.

7. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is it not* he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

Rabshakeh displays either ignorance or impudence; ignorance if he did not know better; impudence if he did. He probably knew that Hezekiah had been breaking down images, cutting down groves, etc. (2 Kings 18: 4), and perhaps supposed that this reformation was really a change of the national religion instead of



a reform which brought the nation back to its own God. He was more proficient in acute diplomacy than in well-defined theology.

8. Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

The original word for "pledges" does not demand any other than a verbal pledge or promise, and the spirit of his taunt requires nothing more. With an exalted estimate of cavalry as an arm of military force, Rabshakeh cries, "O ye unwarlike Jews, what can ye do against Assyrian skill and prowess? I'll give you to-day two thousand horses, if ye can mount them with experienced riders! But ye can not muster a dozen men who dare mount an Arab steed!"

9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

Only the first clause of this verse is interrogative, the last being an inference from the negative which this interrogation implies, thus: "How then wilt thou turn back (to flight) any one captain of my master's servants, even the least warlike? And so thou hast trusted in Egypt for chariots and horsemen!" Rabshakeh infers that the Jews, conscious of being unable to use horses or chariots, had been trusting altogether to Egypt for this form of military force.

10. And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

It is supposable that Rabshakeh had heard something about prophecies in Judah which threatened the people with foreign invasion and even subjugation for their sins; but much more probable that this was a bold stroke of his to break the courage and spirit of the Jews under the idea that their own God had forsaken them and turned to be their enemy.

11. Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

The language here called "Syrian" (in the original *Aramæan*) was cognate with the Hebrew, a dialect used widely in the region north and east of Palestine; and understood by the learned Jews,



but not by the common people. These delegates from Hezekiah said they should understand it, and therefore besought Rabshakeh to speak in this dialect to themselves and not in the common Hebrew language which spectators and listeners from the city walls would understand. It was quite proper that political negotiations of this sort should be conducted in private and not in public.

12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *hath he* not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

Rabshakeh had an object in being heard and understood by the common people. He hoped to act upon their fears and induce them to come over *en masse* to their enemies.—The last part of the verse puts the horrors of famine under the impending siege in their strongest form—men compelled to eat and drink their own excrements!

13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Far from yielding to the request of the Jewish deputies, Rabshakeh raised his voice so as to be heard the more surely by all the people. He extolled his great king; cautioned the Jews against trusting in Hezekiah, and against being encouraged by him to trust in Israel's God. Thus the honor and faithfulness of Jehovah became more and more involved in the pending issue; and this is one of the most hopeful features of the contest.

16. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

The margin "make with me a blessing," is precisely as the original has it, instead of the circumlocution, "make an agreement with me by a present." It is very doubtful whether at this stage

he thought of demanding a "present." He more probably aimed to open negotiations and make them think that the result would be purely a blessing to themselves! Artful fellow was he!—"Come out to me," was the phrase for giving up the contest and going over to the enemy on terms of capitulation or surrender.—He promises them an abundant subsistence on their own vines and fig-trees until he should take them away to a land like their own in fertility and abundance. Profane history shows it to have been the national policy of those great eastern powers to transfer the entire population of a conquered country to some distant region and thus break up their attachments to their father-land and annihilate their spirit of nationality.—The corresponding passage in 2 Kings 18: 32, is somewhat more full, adding, "A land of oil olives and of honey, that ye may live and not die."

18. *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19. Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20. Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

The reader will note throughout this speech the underlying assumption that the military power and prestige of every nation lie ultimately very much in its gods. International war would thus be a contest for superiority between the gods of those nations respectively. In this point of light the present contest lay between the gods of Assyria, and Jehovah, God of Israel.—Under the impetuosity of his rhetoric, Rabshakeh talks blindly, as if the gods of Hamath, Arpad and Sepharvaim were also the gods of Samaria.—The parallel passage in 2 Chron. 32: 13–20, puts this whole case in yet clearer light and should be read in this connection:

"13. Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any way able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?

"14. Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your god should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?

"15. Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand,

and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?

"16. And his servants spake yet *more* against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah.

"17. He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.

"18. Then they cried with a loud voice, in the Jews' speech, unto the people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city.

"19. And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of man.

"20. And for this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven."

21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

"*They*" are not the delegates only, but the people as well. The passage in 2 Kings 18: 36 reads, "*The people* held their peace" etc.

22. Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

These expressions of deep feeling may either indicate their horror at such blasphemy, or their alarm in the presence of such danger, or their humiliation before God; or perhaps all these sentiments may be blended.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THIS chapter continues the narrative of events and communications, leading on to the destruction of the Assyrian host.

1. And it came to pass, when the king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

In the case of Hezekiah as of his deputy, two elements may have blended in the deep agitation of his mind; horror at such

blasphemy, and anxious solicitude for his people and city, and for the honor of God as now involved in the question of their destruction or salvation. He saw at a glance that his compact with Sennacherib to leave the country for a price paid him, availed him nothing and that war was inevitable. What should he do in this emergency save the very thing he did—put on sackcloth and hasten to find God in his temple? Our sense of moral fitness is met and comforted by such a manifestation of trust in his great Protector and Father. It is but little to say, Let every child of God in whatever emergency press his way to the mercy-seat and unbosom his weary burdened soul there! None ever sought help there in vain!

2. And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

That next after God, the king thought of Isaiah and turned to him for sympathy, counsel and prayer, puts the mutual relations of the king and the prophet in a very interesting light. Plainly the prophet enjoyed the full confidence of the king and was held in the highest esteem before all the people. They knew and honored him as the messenger of God to the throne and to the nation. There can be no doubt that Isaiah had borne a leading part in the great reformation upon which Hezekiah entered when he came to the throne. Hence naturally all eyes were turned to him in this emergency, in which the question came so suddenly to a practical issue whether the God they had sought to serve would indeed protect them and pluck their city and kingdom from the open jaws of ruin.—The deputation comprised the same Eliakim and Shebna who were sent before (36: 3, 11), but instead of Joah, in this case were “the elders of the priests,” the aged men, selected, we may suppose, for the dignity of their years and their virtues. Isaiah was himself considerably advanced in years. Hence the greater propriety in this selection of the elders of the priests for this embassy.

3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there* is not strength to bring forth.

“Trouble” must be taken in its strongest sense to make it equivalent to the original for which it stands, and which implies a strain and pressure almost crushing. *Torture* would scarcely be extravagant. “Rebuke” looks beyond the reproach of Rabshakeh to the manifested displeasure of God. The ancients rightly saw the permissive hand of God in even the calamities brought upon them by wicked men. It was this view that gave such calamities

ir bitterest pang. The word used here for "rebuke" has this sense in Hos. 5: 9, and Ps. 73: 14, and 149: 7. "Blasphemy" is the right word to express the reproach cast by Rabshakeh and his master upon God. The figure in the last clause is pre-eminently expressive of pain, peril, weakness, and the need of help.

4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left.

The English version gives no wrong sense, but fails to express fully the agitation and solicitude of the speaker's mind. The word "wherefore," in the clause, "Wherefore lift up thy prayer," etc., is not the usual translation of the Hebrew word. Indeed precisely the same word stands before the verb, "will reprove," and for the right that appears in the original, it might as well be translated "therefore" in the former case as in the latter. The verse, closely translated, would read thus: "If peradventure the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard, and thou wilt lift up thy prayer in behalf of the remnant that is found:" *i. e.*, *If* God will hear those reproachful words, and *if* God will reprove them, and *if* thou wilt pray—then all will be well. But the very omission of this last clause and the suspended sense, evince forcibly the deep emotion and agitation of his heart.—The reader will notice how pertinently Hezekiah says to Isaiah, "The LORD *thy* God;" and also how fitly he designated Jehovah as the *living* God, in contrast with the dead gods of those idolatrous nations.—"The remnant that is found," means the few that are still present; surviving.

5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

It was a comfort to learn that God had heard those blasphemies. The Jews need not fear, since God had taken up the case against himself.—In the last clause, "servants" is not the usual respectful term, but another which means *boys*, and perhaps here with an accessory shading of contempt equal to striplings, youngsters. See Isaiah 3: 4, and notes there.

7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

It is not easy to fix with certainty the sense of the word rendered blast—which usually means wind, spirit, breath, impulse. The English version, “blast,” suggests a sweep of the sirocco—pestilential, deadly; with probable allusion to the supposed cause of the fearful destruction of Sennacherib’s army; but it is by no means clear that this verse refers directly to that catastrophe. The connected clause, “he shall hear a rumor,” suggests a reference rather to the report mentioned in v. 9. This rumor may have indirectly hastened his return to his own land. It is obvious that he feared Tirhakah, and did not wish to meet him in Palestine, and therefore resolved to push his efforts with vigor to subdue Hezekiah, first by summoning him to surrender as here (vs. 9–13); and this failing, by pushing the main body of his army forward upon the city as is implied, vs. 34, 35, and implied yet more fully in the prediction, chap. 10: 25–34. It should be said here however that the precise locality of the army at the time of its destruction remains in some doubt.—This word rendered “blast,” probably means an impulse of fear, a panic. The verse then compresses into fewest words his divinely ordained destiny. The circumstances of his flight home and death are narrated more fully in vs. 37, 38.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

Libnah was an ancient city of note, subdued by Joshua shortly after the fearful rout of his enemies at Bethhoron, next after Makedah and before Lachish. Later it was a city of the priests, and one of the six cities of refuge, of considerable military strength and of some local importance from its being on the route to Egypt.—Lachish was near it, of even greater military strength. The sacred record (2 Chron. 32: 9) states that Sennacherib besieged it with all his forces. Whether he took it is yet in doubt; but probably he did not. The verb here used, “departed from,” means precisely, he *decamped*; broke up camp as if abandoning the enterprise.—On the other hand, in the palace at Koyunjik a slab is found bearing this inscription: “Sennacherib, the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment before [or at the entrance of] the city of Lachish. I give permission for its slaughter.” But the bulletins of war are sometimes vain-glorious, asserting or implying more than the truth. On this supposition, the inscription above quoted is prudently ambiguous—for the king sitting in judgment outside the city walls might have given “permission for its slaughter” without the power to execute it. Or if the theory of two distinct invasions be accepted, then Sennacherib might have subdued both Lachish and Libnah on his first invasion but neither of them on his second.

The inscription in this case might refer to the former and not to the latter.

9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying:

Tirhakah was one of the most powerful monarchs of ancient times. According to Manetho, he was the last king of the twenty-fifth Egyptian dynasty, which was an Ethiopian house. He ruled not only Upper Egypt (Thebais), but also Ethiopia. His name appears in hieroglyphic-phonetic characters in one of the temples of Egypt.—This rumor of his approach startled Sennacherib. His first effort was to urge Hezekiah to surrender. He must have assumed that Hezekiah had not heard the news from Egypt.

10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

In this message Sennacherib recognizes and names Hezekiah as king of Judah, which Rabshakeh did not do. The reason of this difference may have been that Rabshakeh was operating on the minds of the people, and therefore spake of their king contemptuously; while Sennacherib is acting on Hezekiah's mind and therefore deems it politic to treat him personally with decent respect.—The English version represents God as saying (in the last clause), Jerusalem shall not be given up to Assyria, and so as deceiving Hezekiah. On the contrary the original rather plainly attributes this last saying to Hezekiah, as expressive of his confidence in God. The order of the words in the original is this: "Let not thy God deceive thee in whom thou art trusting" [so as] "to say, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." He represents Hezekiah as having so much confidence in God that he was saying this: He will never give this city into that enemy's hand.

11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

Another construction of the last clause, more literal than the English version, is also more forcible. It makes it not a question, but an ironical affirmation; and *thou shalt be delivered!* The word "*thou*" is emphatic, the pronoun being expressed. And yet *thou* art vain enough to think thy weak throne, thy feeble city, will be an exception!

12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Telassar?

Did their gods deliver those nations which my father destroyed, according to the prevalent notion that the ultimate power of each nation lay in its gods. This question puts the case as it lay before Hezekiah's mind, for he had no other confidence save in his infinite God, the faithful One of Israel.—Gozan was also in Mesopotamia, on the river Chaboras, and one of the countries to which the ten tribes were taken. Of its conquest by Assyria, we know nothing.—Haran was also in Mesopotamia, and appears in the early history of Abraham. Of Rezeph little is known. The "children of Eden" are rather a people than a country, no reference whatever being had to the primitive Eden.

13. Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

For Hamath and Arpad, see notes on Isa. 10: 9, and also Jer. 49: 23. Sepharvaim lay in Southern Mesopotamia, probably the Sipphara of classic geography. Of the other places mentioned, nothing is certainly known.

14. And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

The piety and simplicity manifest here were admirable; his piety in hastening at once to the temple to seek God; his simplicity in laying out the open letter before God as if for him to read. We need not suppose that in Hezekiah's view, God would need to have the letter brought up to his temple and spread out open in his presence before he could read it or know its contents. By no means. And yet it was entirely fitting that Hezekiah should conceive of God as manifesting his gracious presence *very* specially in his temple. His going there to pray assumed this. The entire system of religious worship in that age assumed it.

15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

16. O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubim, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

The language of this prayer is full of pertinent significance.



"O Jehovah of the celestial armies" [here are the armies of thy foes]; "God of Israel" [for so thou hast called thyself, and therefore we hope in thee now]; "sitting upon [or beneath] the cherubim." Literally this is, "The sitter of the cherubim," a phrase which does not define his position whether upon or *beneath*. It refers to the visible glory, the Shechinah, which really sat upon the lid of the ark, otherwise called "the mercy-seat," and underneath the wings of the cherubim which overshadowed the seat of mercy. "Thou art *he*, the only God as to all the kingdoms of the earth," *i. e.*, the only God of them all. The decisive proof of this is that thou hast made both the heavens and the earth. The great Maker of all worlds must be also the King and Ruler of all the nations of this world.

17. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

The first main point in this prayer is that God would give his attention to this case. Hear thou and see what this impious letter contains. In the last clause, the most simple construction is, "Hear the words of Sennacherib *who* hath sent (*i. e.*, this letter) to reproach the living God." The parallel passage (2 Kings 19: 16) reads, "Sennacherib who hath sent him (this messenger) to reproach," etc.

18. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

The word for "nations" is the plural and the word for "countries" is the singular of the same Hebrew noun. It is usually rendered earth or *land*. The plural I take to mean the countries of the heathen; the singular, their soil and its productions. Indeed, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the heathen countries and their land; but shall they also lay waste thine own land of promise?

19. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

It was an easy matter to vanquish such gods, and consequently to destroy the people and countries which had no better gods for their protection.

20. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

This exigency was indeed critical to Hezekiah and his people but sublime to the great Jehovah as affording to him a glorious

opportunity to reveal himself and show his incomparable majesty, and the glory of his saving power.—“Save us from his hand; then shall all the kingdoms of the earth know that thou only art Jehovah; the changeless, ever faithful and infinite God.”—The last clause refers to the special significance of the name Jehovah.

21. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

22. This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

The last clause of v. 21, is more precisely rendered; “As to what thou hast prayed to me concerning the king of Assyria; this is the word,” etc.—Zion and Jerusalem are equivalent expressions, the “daughter” in each case being put collectively for the whole people of the city. They are thought of here as the Lord’s people, in covenant with him and under his care. God looks with fearless scorn upon the puny efforts of the Assyrian king; and because his people are under his wing the same fearlessness is ascribed to them.—The last clause seems to mean, “Shaken her head *after* thee,” *i. e.*, as she saw thee in thy hasty flight, panic-stricken. The same phrase, “Shake the head” occurs Psalms 22: 7, in the same sense of scorn.

23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.

The form of expression in the original is preserved better by throwing the whole of this verse into the question and then commencing the answer in the next verse, thus: “Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and then even lifted thine eyes upward toward the Holy One of Israel? By thy servants thou hast reproached Jehovah,” etc., the only living and changeless God! With lofty tones and with eyes defiantly lifted toward heaven, thou hast blasphemed the Mighty God!

24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, *and* the forest of his Carmel.

This is a specimen of oriental magniloquence. In this verse and the next, the Lord puts the heart of the proud Assyrian into

words. These bold poetic conceptions must be taken figuratively to mean that no obstacle avails to arrest or even to embarrass his career of conquest. With his countless chariots, he can easily scale Mount Lebanon; reach its highest mountain-peaks; cut down its tallest cedars. The last word "Carmel" should be taken as a common and not a proper noun, meaning, into his garden-forest, *i. e.*, garden-like forest.

25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

In the same strain he says, in my march through deserts, I dug for water if I needed it. In approaching fortified cities defended by rivers or moats of water, I dried them up with the sole of my foot. If there were too much water, I dried it up; if too little, I dug and found what I wanted. No obstacles in nature have withstood me; neither desert sands nor mighty rivers can impede my progress.

26. Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defended cities *into* ruinous heaps.

27. Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

Having in the two verses previous finished his representation of the vain boasts of the Assyrian king, the Lord here reveals to him the true secret of whatever power he had had. The Lord had occasion to use him as a scourge upon guilty nations, and therefore gave him for a time this great power to use under his own providential direction and for his own purposes. The same reason is assigned for the Assyrian's conquests in chap. 10: 5-7, 12-15. "Hast not thou, O Sennacherib, heard long since, through the prophecies of my servant that I have given thee these victories for the chastisement of the wicked? Did I not foretell the fall of these cities for their great sins? Now I have done it by giving thee the power to reduce strong cities to desolate heaps. It was by means of this power thus given thee that the people of those cities were weak of hand against thee; as easily cut down as the grass of the field, or self-withering like grass starting into growth on the housetop, or corn blasting before it reaches maturity." These figures are full of force to show that God had given this proud conqueror all his great power. This view was well adapted to bring down his self-conceit and pride. It is no less true of every other great conqueror, and of all other forms of human power.

The pride, therefore, that exalts man and not God is both false in its assumed facts and impious in its spirit. No wonder it should provoke the Lord to a just retribution!

28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

"Abode" is better expressed in the margin, "thy sitting;" grouped here with going out and coming in to express the general thought, I know all thy ways and all thine heart as well. The declaration culminates in this, "Thy rage against me."

29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest.

The word rendered "tumult" is more precisely arrogance. The figures which express the ease and effectiveness of God's control over him are drawn from the methods of subduing and "breaking in" fierce bulls, horses, and various wild animals. Figures of the same sort appear in Ezek. 29: 4, and 38: 4; also in Job 41: 1. The mighty God had need of but one of the myriads of his angels to put the hook into the jaws of this Assyrian beast, and turn him back by the way he came, crest-fallen, humbled, and broken down in power.

30. And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

The address turns from Sennacherib to Hezekiah.

According to the Mosaic law (Lev. 25: 4-11), every seventh year was one of rest from sowing and reaping. It was often called the "Sabbatic year." Each forty-ninth year being Sabbatic, the fiftieth, next following it, was the year of Jubilee, and this too was a year of rest from sowing and reaping. Now in the forty-ninth year some grain would grow, self-sown, from the scattered seed of the previous year's harvest; and again, on the fiftieth year, there might be some self-sown from this—"that which groweth of the same." Hence the Hebrews had special words to designate these self-sown grains. These words are both used in this verse.—By the law of the Sabbatic year and also of the Jubilee, the people were not to gather these self-sown grains, but to leave them for the poor and for animals. In the present case, the Lord says, Ye shall eat these grains.—This verse has embarrassed commentators greatly, especially because it seems to imply that the country during the year then current and the next also, would be so much

harassed and imperiled by the Assyrians as to prevent seed-sowing and harvesting, and that there could be no sowing of grain until the third year; while yet the context seems to say very explicitly that the Assyrian army was destroyed on the very next night (2 Kings 19: 35), and that their king with the surviving remnant fled home immediately. Now a sign given to guaranty a promise as a pledge of its fulfillment should naturally *precede* that fulfillment, so that when present to sight, it should help to sustain faith in the promise. This is the usual and legitimate sense of this word "sign." See Isaiah 7: 10-16, and Exodus 3: 12, Judges 6: 36-40, and 1 Kings 13: 3-5. But in this case there was no time for the sign to take effect until long after the destruction of the Assyrian army. Indeed this destruction was so near as (apparently) to supersede the necessity of any sign to assure Hezekiah of the event.—But another view may be taken of this case, viz., that the sign had no special reference to this destruction of the Assyrian army, but looked forward to the period still subsequent and was designed to assure Hezekiah that *this Assyrian king should return no more*.—It might be impossible to sow grain that year because the season for it was doubtless past. The ravages of such a war could not be sufficiently repaired and quiet sufficiently restored to admit much sowing during the next year; but on the third year, sowing and reaping would come in their usual place, which would be a *sign* to assure Hezekiah that all danger from the Assyrians was past forever.—This exposition given by Mr. Barnes seems to avoid the difficulties which attend other expositions and to meet a natural want in the mind of Hezekiah.—Some have attempted to explain the passage by assuming that the year then current was the Sabbatic and the next the Jubilee, saying that hence the Mosaic law would forbid their sowing and reaping these two years; but that as soon as the law would permit, the country would be in readiness for seed-sowing and harvest-gathering.—The objections to this theory are—(1.) That there is no evidence that these years were the forty-ninth and the fiftieth. (2.) That if they had been, the Mosaic law would forbid their eating these self-sown grains, which God here commands them to eat, and (3.) That on this supposition, the "sign" amounts to this only; that in regard to sowing and reaping, things were to take their natural, legal course according to the Mosaic law. But how the natural course of things can be a miraculous or supernatural sign, it is not easy to see.

31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

This remnant appear under a figure analogous to that which represents the Messiah (chap. 11 : 1), the stock of a tree whose top is cut off, but whose roots strike out again and which bears fruit once more. A remnant are saved from Jerusalem, implying a very considerable loss of life to the country by war or captivity as the consequence of these Assyrian invasions. See notes on chap. 10 : 24, where the reader will find some of the records of Assyrian history in regard to the captives taken.

33. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

This passage may mean only that he shall never *again* besiege the city, and may not imply that he has not previously done it. The Assyrian records claim that the king's army did besiege the city on their first invasion of Judea. This account does not contradict their statement.—It must have been a gratifying assurance to Hezekiah in the sense that they should never renew the siege.

34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

The form of statement, "by the way that he came," might be understood to imply that he had already come very near the city. Yet it is not definite, and might be used even if his army had been no nearer during these expeditions than Lachish and Libnah. The special reason for his being in that south-west corner of the territory of Judah was that his main designs were upon Egypt rather than upon Jerusalem or Judea.

35. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

The two reasons assigned for defending the city were *his "own sake"*—the honor and glory of his name, now fully implicated by the blasphemies and boasts of the Assyrian king ; and the promises he had made to David respecting his royal seed. See 2 Sam 7 : 12. This promise looks not only to his pious successors like Hezekiah, but pre-eminently to his greater Son, the promised Messiah. For the sake of all the interests imbosomed in this royal seed and this future kingdom, God would surely protect Jerusalem against this proud blasphemous foe.

36. Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

Here in fewest words is the grand, sublime event which vindicated the dishonored name of Jehovah; brought down just retribution on the haughty, impious Assyrian; plucked God's dying people from the open jaws of ruin, and gave a glorious testimony to the faithfulness, the power and the presence of Israel's God. It became a night to be ever remembered of the Lord's ancient people; a fountain of religious impulse; a theme of fresh and grateful praise for ages to the escaped of Israel.—

As already suggested, it avails little to ask *how* the thing was done. The narrative leads us to think of an angel of the Lord, perhaps of the same class as the angel of the pestilence who smote the people for the sin of David in numbering them (2 Sam. 24: 13–17). There is no objection either in the Scriptures or in the philosophy of the material universe to the doctrine that God employs holy angels for any supernatural agency that he may deem it important to introduce into our world. For all we can know, they may seize and wield physical agencies, such as the pestilence, or the lightnings of heaven, at their will, rather, at the will of God under whom they act. Of the limitations of their own personal powers over this material world, we know very little indeed. It is reasonable to assume that their power is very great; but beyond this what can we know?—In this fearful slaughter, some—how many we know not—awoke, to awake in the morning and find one hundred and eighty-five thousand of their comrades in arms *dead!*—The narrative (2 Chron. 32: 21) implies that this mortality was specially great among the officers. “The Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty men of valor and the leaders and the captains in the camp of the king of Assyria.” This would conduce greatly to disorganize and panic-smite the entire army.—Let us note yet again that, in reference to this whole subject, more questions can be raised than the sacred narrative will answer. We ask in vain *where they were* at the time; whether all together, or divided between two or more places; by what physical agencies, if any, the slaughter was effected; how many survived, and whether the king ever actually besieged Jerusalem. These unanswered questions do not invalidate the great facts of the narrative, nor in any wise abate from the moral force of the great lessons which it teaches. Perhaps it was the Lord's special design to foreclose our critical and historical inquiries in order to shut us up the more closely to the consideration of these great moral lessons. Be this as it may, it behooves us to count these moral lessons the main thing, and to give them our chief and very earnest attention.—A curious tradition, not a little distorted, yet preserving some of the main features of the narrative, has come down to us through Herodotus, as told by Egyptian priests. It transfers the whole scene to Egypt,



sets forth that Sethos their king was a priest and favorite of Vulcan; that he fell into great distress through fear of an invasion by Sennacherib; that he sought help of his god; received the promise of special protection and obtained it by means of a countless host of mice who overspread the Assyrian camp, and destroyed their quivers, bows, and shields. On the next morning they were obliged to flee and many fell slain. The narrative of Herodotus closes thus: "And now there stands in the temple of Vulcan a stone statue of this king, having a mouse in his hand, and speaking by an inscription to this effect; '*Let him who looks on me reverence the gods.*'"—This is by no means a solitary instance of Hebrew miracles appearing in the legends of other nations, distorted to their own purposes.—It is remarkable that the central idea, the interposition of God in answer to prayer, and the reverence due appropriately to God therefor, should be so well preserved.

37. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

Note how the historian lingers upon the delightful thought of the king's return to Nineveh: "he departed; he went; he returned." Were we not glad for this relief from our fears! Did we not sing the high praises of the Lord Jehovah, who once more evinced himself, as of old, the mighty God of Israel?

38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote with him the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

While in the very act of idol worship he was smitten dead! Murdered by two of his own sons—a double retribution for his guilty life!—The very ancient profane historians, Alexander Polyhystor and Abydenus, have each left brief notices of this event, which are still extant. Eusebius reports Polyhystor thus: Having already described the rest of the acts of Sennacherim, he adds that he lived [as king] eighteen years . . . until he was destroyed by a plot formed against him by his son Ardumarzan." (Rawlinson's Evidences, page 329.)—Moses of Chorene, writing as in Armenia, says: "When his sons, Adrammelech and Sanasar, had slain Sennacherim, they fled to us."—Armenia (in the original *Ararat*) appears in the Assyrian records of that age as an independent state, generally hostile to Assyria. Both Sennacherib and Esar-haddon led armies into that country to subdue it.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THIS chapter and the next treat of Hezekiah's sickness unto death; his prayer, recovery and song of praise; the embassy from Babylon, the reception he gave them, and Isaiah's prediction that his treasures as spoil and the royal family as captives should be borne away to Babylon.

1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

"Sick unto death" implies that the disorder was naturally fatal and that this result was to be expected. All uncertainty was removed by this special mission of Isaiah from the Lord. 'Set thy house in order,' means, give directions concerning thy house; make thy "will;" arrange thy business and estate.

2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,

3. And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which* is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

He turned his face to the wall, we may suppose, that he might feel himself to be alone with God. His plea for longer life rests on his general fidelity to God. These few words probably do not give us all the reasons why he prayed so earnestly for life. If we accept the dates of the Scripture history, this sickness must have been very near the time of the Assyrian invasion, and probably before the grand catastrophe which so much relieved the king and the nation. Why should not a good king pray to be spared till he might see his kingdom safe?—On the other hand if the grand army had been recently destroyed, he might naturally feel a strong desire to enjoy with his people, yet a season longer, the luxuries of thanksgiving and praise for

this saving mercy.—Josephus makes prominent the fact that at this time, Hezekiah had no son to succeed him, and therefore felt special solicitude for the succession. Manasseh was born three years after this recovery.

4. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying:

5. Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

The more full account in 2 Kings 20 states that "before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Turn again and tell Hezekiah," etc., implying that Isaiah lingered after having delivered his previous message (v. 1); perhaps had been witness to the king's earnest prayer and deep emotion, and then received the Lord's answer before he left the palace.—This second message from the Lord is also given more fully in Kings. After the clause, "I have seen thy tears," we read, "Behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord."—One point of special kindness in this answer lies in the descriptive clause, "*The Lord, the God of David thy father.*" Hezekiah had been a second David, following more closely in his steps than any other royal son of his. This prominent fact of his life had been involved in Hezekiah's prayer: "I have walked before thee with a perfect heart," and is here tacitly admitted in the Lord's gracious answer. The tenderness of the reply is precious: "I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears." Oh, truly, God does hear the imploring cry of pressing want and strong desire. Not a tear ever fell in his sight unheeded. There are thousands of prayers for prolonged life which God can not wisely grant; but he loves to grant them when he wisely can. This case stands a witness to the loving-kindness of his heart.—The answer, "I give thee fifteen more years to live, put Hezekiah in the very peculiar condition of knowing how long he should live, as if the Lord had said to him, "You have more work to do as king of my people, and also more of a useful devoted life to enjoy. I assign its limit; work diligently while you may."—As already intimated, the promise, "I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria," certainly seems to imply that the decisive blow which crushed the Assyrian was not yet struck.

7. And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken.

8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

The more full and better arranged narrative in Kings states at this point that Hezekiah first inquired what should be the sign that the Lord would heal him and that he should go up to the temple on the third day; that Isaiah gave him his choice: "Shall the sun's shadow go forward or shall it go back ten degrees?" and that Hezekiah chose the latter. "Then Isaiah cried unto the Lord, and the Lord brought the shadow ten degrees backward by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz."—In reference to this event, critics have pushed their inquiries and speculations very earnestly to ascertain, first, what sort of dial or instrument was used here for measuring the degrees of the sun's shadow; and, secondly, what *was* this phenomenon? Was it a change in the shadow only as it appeared on the dial, or was it a recession of the sun itself?—The first point has no great importance nor am I aware that any data exist for a full and reliable opinion. It is a very simple thing to indicate the sun's apparent progress by the passing of a shadow along the circumference of a circle divided into degrees for the purpose. Of the details in this case who can say?—In regard to the phenomenon itself, three different suppositions have been made: (1.) That it was an optical illusion—a trick or deception, wrought by Isaiah, or by some one in his interest. (2.) That the sun's rays were miraculously refracted, bent back; but without any change in the earth's revolution on its axis. (3.) That the earth's revolution was arrested—its motion reversed, so that the recession of the sun's shadow was only the legitimate result of the earth's position relative to the sun.—The first supposition is not to be thought of. Accepting the inspiration of the prophet and the infinite honesty of his divine Master, we must repel such a supposition as an insult and outrage upon God.—Either the second or third supposition may be adopted. Either would be a miracle. Either is within the power of God. Either would answer the purpose sought. If the latter were the form of the miracle, all we need say in reference to any supposed disturbance upon the earth's surface, is this; that the God who could work such a miracle could miraculously prevent any of this supposed disturbance. Whenever he sees fit to arrest the course of nature, he can limit the results of such arrest to the point to which he would have them apply.

9. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

This psalm or ode written by Hezekiah (vs. 10-20) is a sort of memorial record of his thoughts and emotions during those solemn days when the Lord brought him so near the gates of death. It may have been written in part for his own personal benefit; in part to cherish the social sympathy of his friends and people. We may suppose it to have been sung or chanted in social worship.—The original might as well be read, "When he was sick and was recovering from his sickness," *i. e.*, during the process of recovery, while his experiences were yet fresh in his mind.

10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

The precise sense of the word translated, "cutting off" is a matter of some doubt. The choice lies between, (1.) The *rest-period*; the time for taking rest and enjoying repose; and (2.) The *meridian*; the middle period of life. In either case, the clause should be construed with what follows, not with what precedes. He does not mean that he said thus *in* this period, but that, in this period he was doomed to go to the grave, torn away from life in the very midst of his days, or just as he had fairly begun to enjoy quiet and happiness.

11. I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even* the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

The sense of the English version is, I shall see no more manifestations of God as a faithful, covenant-keeping God (the significance of the term Jehovah), in the land of the living, nor shall I see anything more of man among the dwellers of this world. That is, dying now, I shall see no more of the great and interesting achievements of either God or man in this world.—The critical difficulties of the verse turn on its last word. Some suppose this refers to the present world; others refer it to the future world, the state of the departed dead. In the latter sense the meaning of the clause would be; I, being in that world of the dead, shall see man no more, *i. e.*, as he manifests himself here. The parallelism strongly favors the former construction, "I shall behold man in this world no more." It is also favored by the probable allusion to Ps. 49: 2, "Hear this, all ye inhabitants of the world," *i. e.*, of *this* world. The word

used by the Psalmist has a special resemblance to this one used here.

12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

The sudden termination of his life is expressed here under two figures, the striking of a tent at the breaking up of a nomadic encampment for moving onward; and cutting the woven cloth from the loom when the work is done. I translate, not, "mine age is departed;" but "my dwelling [or tent] is struck and is uncovered from me," *i. e.*, taken away from being over me as a covering, "like the tent of a shepherd." "I have cut off my life as a weaver" [does his warp]; "he will cut me off from the thrum; from the dawn of day till the night will he finish me;" *i. e.*, within the course of one day he will use up all my vital forces, and bring me down to death.

13. I reckoned till morning, *that*, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

The English version gives the sense proximately, yet not with entire precision. The first verb I take to mean here as in Ps. 16: 8, and 119: 30, I set him [God] before me, *i. e.*, I thought of him as present with me and as being like a lion crushing all my bones. "I had him present to my mind till morning" [saying to myself] "as a lion, so will he break all my bones."

14. Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail *with looking* upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

He compares his groans to the moan of certain birds, of which the dove is best known. "Mine eyes are too weak to look upward;" literally, mine eyelids *droop*, hang pendulously, as if I had lost the power to raise them.—"Undertake for me," means, interpose for my relief. The same verb is used Ps. 119: 122; "Be surety for thy servant for good;" *i. e.*, in legal phrase, appear as my "next friend."

15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all the years in the bitterness of my soul.

Taken by itself and apart from the last clause, the first half of the verse might be understood either as the language of a subdued, submissive spirit under chastisement from God; or as

that of a grateful heart after and in view of deliverance from suffering. In connection with the last clause, the latter construction only is admissible, because while he was still borne down under his sufferings, he could not have spoken of living many years. This circumstance therefore determines the sense of the whole verse. "What shall I say to express adequately my gratitude and thanks to my Deliverer? He promised to restore me and he has done it. O let me now and henceforth walk softly long as I live," not "in" but *for* (because of) the bitterness of anguish through which I have passed, yet out of which my gracious Father hath saved me."—"Going softly" well expresses that careful, conscientious, solemn state of mind and course of life which such a sense of divine mercy should inspire. The same verb is used elsewhere only in Ps. 42: 5, and there of the solemn march of the tribes as they ascend the temple-hill on the days of their great national feasts. "I *went*" [walked softly] "with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy day."—None can fail to admire and love this humble, grateful spirit in the restored king. How beautiful to see him bearing the honors of a throne, yet walking softly before the great God!—But then we are reminded to ask why every pardoned sinner, lifted from a deeper pit, redeemed from a more awful peril, should not make every word of this verse his own in its spiritual significance, and cry out; What shall I say that I may adequately praise my Savior? He hath spoken to me most precious words of promise and pardon, and he *hath done it!* O let me too walk softly before him all my remaining years because of the bitterness of my stricken soul in the days of my guilt and rebellion!

16. O LORD, by these *things men* live, and in all these *things* is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

No other pertinent sense can be made from these words in this connection except this; "O Lord, by these things"—thy promised and performed mercies—such blessings as thou hast kindly granted to me, "do men live;" human life is full of such manifested goodness from God: "And in reference to all these things my spirit lives, or, "there is life to my spirit." In the last clause, the word "so" should rather be *and*. "*And* thou wilt still restore and save me, *i. e.*, through the years of life that yet remain for me.

17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

The English version assumes that the thought in the first

clause returns to his bitter sorrow during his sickness; Instead of the peace which I was before enjoying, I had great bitterness; but God has brought me out, etc. But more probably his thought is of the change from the great bitterness of his sickness to the peace that succeeded, which peace is in the last clause expanded and referred to God's love toward him. The passage might be translated; "Behold, my great bitterness turned to peace; and," (not 'but') "thou hast loved my soul" [and therefore brought it forth] "out of the pit of destruction;" as if God's love became itself the power that lifted him up from the pit. God had freely forgiven all his sins, and therefore had heard his prayer for recovery. This is forcibly expressed in the phrase "cast them all behind thy back." The Hebrew conception of pardon is usually that of *covering* one's sins; hiding them from view; seeing and remembering them no more.

18. For the grave can not praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit can not hope for thy truth.

19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

"The grave" (Sheol); the place of the dead; and "death," which means strictly the destroyer, must both be used here for the *dead themselves*, corresponding in the parallel clause with "they that go down into the pit," the abode of the dead. Yet we can not infer from this language of Hezekiah that he knew nothing of a blessed and praising life for the just in the spirit world, or that he held to an unconscious state of the dead until the resurrection. We may however safely admit that his views of the future blessedness of the righteous were not then developed so as to stand out prominently before his mind and mold all his conceptions of death and of the future world in its relations to the present. His language here is accounted for by supposing that his mind is absorbed with the interest and the blessedness of praising God in his earthly temple, and of testifying before all his people to the great things God had wrought for him. These modes of recognizing and praising God's goodness and of bearing his joyful testimony for God before the wide world, he appreciates deeply, hence he says; I can not do this in the grave; if I had died in my sickness, I should have been cut off from this most precious privilege of witnessing for God here among his people.—The same explanation must be given to the language of the Psalmist (6: 5, and 88: 10-12). "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave, who shall give thee thanks?" etc.

20. The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

The original is terse and expressive; "Jehovah, to save me!" These are the two grand ideas; *God; my salvation*. These are his themes of song during all his remaining days. Let my friends join me in these out-flowings of praise, with the aid of music, in God's holy temple. How naturally he now thinks of perpetual praise in that temple whither he hastened for prayer when the proud Assyrian put him in peril! (chap. 37: 1, 4.)—The narrative in 2 Chron. 32 makes a mournful supplement to this verse, thus:

"But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

"Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

This refers mainly, we may suppose, to the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon, the subject of the next chapter.

21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.

22. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

These two points; the prescribed remedy, and Hezekiah's request for a sign; are manifestly brought in here out of their natural place, as after thoughts, omitted through inadvertence at their proper place in the narrative. Dr. Alexander pertinently suggests that since these points are brought into the narrative in their natural order in 2 Kings, we must regard these chapters in Isaiah as the first draft, which was improved and arranged in better order in the subsequent narrative revised and prepared for insertion in the historical annals of the nation.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

THIS narrative stands in essentially the same form in 2 Kings 20: 12-19. Some additional points are made in 2 Chron. 32: 25-31.



1. At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

The name of Merodach-baladan as king of Babylon occurs both in the annals of Assyria and in the canon of Ptolemy. These documents locate his reign B. C. 721-709, and again for six months in B. C. 702. This sickness of Hezekiah was in the year B. C. 713, within the reign of Baladan. The latter headed the party of Chaldean independence at an age when Nineveh was the greater city and Assyria the mightier empire. Twice in his desperate struggles with that overshadowing power he was defeated; the last time driven into exile. These circumstances probably account for his interest in cultivating friendly relations with Hezekiah. They had a common cause in opposing the Assyrian power. This state of things moreover rendered this embassy a special snare to Hezekiah, since it both appealed to his vanity, and enticed him away from trusting alone in God to at least a measure of trust in a heathen ally.—The narrative in 2 Chron. 32: 31 states that "the ambassadors were sent to inquire as to the wonder that was done in the land." Inasmuch as Isaiah gives prominence to the fact that they had heard of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, we must suppose this to be the "wonder" referred to.

2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

The statement in 2 Kings 20: 13 is that "Hezekiah hearkened to them," instead of, "was glad of them," as here; meaning that he gave them a cordial reception and listened with interest to their communications. The language here is slightly stronger, expressing special joy in their coming.—This inventory of things shown them is manifestly intended to include everything of which an oriental king would be proud, embracing both his personal wealth and the resources of his kingdom for war. "The house of his armor" was the royal arsenal, built by Solomon and referred to by Isaiah (chap. 22: 8). See notes there.—These acts of Hezekiah, put into words, would say, Have I not riches and strength and resources for war? Would it not be an object for your king to cultivate my friendship and form an alliance with my kingdom? He may have tacitly compared himself with Solomon when visited by the Queen of Sheba,

coming from an equally remote country. We must think of his sin as consisting in part in his desire for an alliance with heathen idolaters ; in part also in his vanity ; but his conduct appears in its true and full light only when we consider that these ambassadors came, at least in part, to inquire respecting his supernatural recovery from sickness ; that in his memorial song, he had expressed a very earnest desire to live that he might praise God among the living and testify to all the world his gratitude to his gracious Benefactor ; and yet when this admirable opportunity came providentially to his hand, his vanity swamped his piety, made him forget his solemn vow to walk softly before God all his days, and drove out of his mind (apparently) every thought of bearing a grateful testimony for the God of Israel before these heathen ambassadors. We must suppose that they made their inquiries as they were commissioned to do ; and the marvel is that those inquiries did not quicken his recollection of the mercy shown him, of the vows also which he had made, and that they did not suggest that now was the time to witness earnestly for the living God ; but alas, for human frailty when God leaves a man to try him that he may know what is in his heart ! This is the discriminating and philosophical explanation given by the author of 2 Chron. (32 : 25) of this sad dereliction in Christian duty. "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefits done to him, for his heart was lifted up." This is accounted for thus (v. 31) : "In the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him that he might know all that was in his heart."——Who will not pray, O my God, never leave me to stand any trial alone ! Suffer me never to "be tempted above what I am able to bear, but evermore, with the temptation, also make a way to escape," that through grace I may stand complete in all the will of God.——To the inquiry, What precisely and how much is meant by the language, "God *left him* to try him," etc., two possible answers may be given : (1.) That God left him without specific directions through his prophets or otherwise, giving him only general principles to guide his conduct. (2.) That he left him without the inward guiding of his Spirit, withholding from him all special suggestions, monitions, and impulses, which might have warned him in the moment of danger and might have saved him from falling into this sin. The latter may perhaps be included under the language. I am not aware of any positive data from which we can determine this point. But the former is without doubt involved, partly because Hezekiah was frequently receiving special directions from the Lord through his prophet, and partly because this corresponds with the general laws of moral trial in this world of probation. In thousands of cases God leaves us

with general precepts only, committing it to our own docility whether we will diligently study his will and keep our heart open lovingly to every demand for self-denying duty; leaving it also to our conscientiousness whether we will scrupulously watch against every temptation to swerve from his will.—It would seem that the Lord left Hezekiah in a sense peculiar and special—as to him; and precisely this feature is met by the supposition that he sent no prophet to him with particular directions as to his reception of these ambassadors, but left it to his own piety, to his conscientiousness, to his sense of past mercies and to his solemn vows to walk softly before God and to witness gratefully to his restoring mercy. This was entirely in harmony with the general laws under which God shapes the moral probation of men in this world. In this sense, therefore, I infer that the Lord left Hezekiah. Such a form of trial we must accept as entirely legitimate and righteous on the part of God. Yet since in all his dealings with us he is never other than a gracious Father, it behooves us, conscious of our moral weakness, still the more to pray, “Lead us not into temptation;” subject us never to a trial too severe for our frail strength; suffer us not to be tempted without providing also a large way of escape that we may surely bear it, “more than conquerors through him who hath loved us.”

3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah and said unto him, What said these men; and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon.

4. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

It is noticeable that Hezekiah did not at first answer both the questions put by Isaiah. But the prophet had his mission from God and knew where to place his finger to touch the sin of his king and friend. This must have been to him a heavy message, borne with a sad heart, yet a heart true and faithful to his God. No hint is dropped as to his emotions however; we only know that he did not shrink in any wise from this painful duty.

5. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts.

6. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

This is the earliest full and specific prophecy of the captivity in Babylon. Intimations and progressive steps toward it may be distinctly traced long ere this. Moses, seven hundred years before, had threatened the nation with captivity in a remote land if they should apostatize from their God. (Lev. 26: 33, 38, and Deut. 28: 64-68, and 30: 3). Abijah (1 Kings 14: 15) had declared from the Lord to Jeroboam that the Lord would root up Israel (the ten tribes) out of this good land and scatter them beyond the river, (the Euphrates). Amos (5: 27) had said (of the northern kingdom), "I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus." But nothing so definite as this had been said of the southern kingdom unless the brief prediction of Micah (4: 10) was somewhat earlier. Micah and Isaiah were contemporary prophets. Which first predicted this captivity to Babylon, we have no means of knowing. But here the prediction stands full and strong. All the royal treasures and even the treasures accumulated through many reigns in the temple as well as all its sacred vessels, must go to Babylon. All had been shown to their ambassadors in the spirit of vanity; hence the retribution of God must fall on the nation. It is elsewhere shown very distinctly that the captivity to Babylon was sent for other sins than this of Hezekiah, especially for the great sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 21: 11-14 and 23: 26, and 24: 3, 4), and also for the deep, incurable apostasy of the people. But Hezekiah's sin was such as made it appropriate to announce this future captivity to him and to his people. The infliction upon him personally was rather in this announcement than in the captivity itself.—The future installments of this threatened calamity fell first upon Manasseh when he was sent a captive to Babylon (2 Chron. 33: 11); then upon Jehoiakim in his fourth year; upon Jehoiachin his son after a three months' wicked reign, and finally upon Zedekiah after his reign of eleven years.—That members of the royal family should be taken to Babylon, and some of them become eunuchs there (probably in the general sense of officers, bearing household responsibilities), is verified quite distinctly in 2 Kings 24: 12-16, and Daniel 1: 3, 4. The historian in Kings used the same word here rendered "eunuch" (vs. 12, 15). Our English version has it "officers." Jehoiachin spent at least thirty-seven years of prison-life there, and Zedekiah was taken there a captive. This prophecy, delivered while yet Babylon was scarcely an independent power, received (a full hundred years later) a very specific fulfillment. This message must be dated about B. C. 713. The first considerable deportation of captives occurred B. C. 606; the last B. C. 588.

8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

In the spirit of a truly good man, Hezekiah bowed submissively, not only without a murmur, but with gratitude that God should exempt him personally from the severity of these inflictions. He made no apologies; no self-vindications; but manifestly admitted that God had done right in rebuking his sin thus stringently. It was a comfort to him that there should be peace, not war, and truth in the sense of piety; the truth of God exerting its living force upon the minds of men during his lifetime. —We may presume that this timely interposition effectually blocked any movement that might otherwise have been made toward an alliance between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon. We may also hope that having been thus rebuked for this great sin and having repented of it, he thenceforth knew his own weakness better, walked more softly with God, and passed the closing years of his life in humble, active piety, a better man for having been "left of God that he might know all that was in his heart."



## REMARKS ON ISAIAH 40-66.

This portion of Isaiah is usually called his "*Later Prophecies*," because they were obviously written later in his life than those which precede. The reader will refer to what has been said in the general introduction concerning the special features of this portion, its general course of thought, its central themes, and the treatment it has received from that class of critics who deny the existence of any real prophecy. What was said there respecting the general scope and course of thought in these chapters, need not be repeated here. It will be quite in point however to verify those statements as we proceed.

## CHAPTER XL.

THE great and joyful thought, central in this chapter, is that *God is coming* in some signal manifestations of power and grace and in fulfillment of promise. For this let his people be comforted (vs. 1,

2); let his way be prepared (vs. 3-5); for however frail all men and all human things are, God's word is sure and abiding (vs. 6-8). Let Evangelists proclaim to all the cities of Judah that God is coming (v. 9); with great strength (v. 10); and yet with no less wonderful tenderness and compassion (v. 11). None so great as he (v. 12), nor any so wise as to have taught him (vs. 13, 14); for all the nations even are as nothing before him and all the world could not make an adequate sacrifice (vs. 15-17). Shall God be compared to a graven image, curiously wrought with human skill, by human fingers (vs. 18-20)? He who made the world, who spread out the heavens, who shapes the destinies of nations—is not he the mighty God, able to fulfill every word of his promise (vs. 21-26)? Why then should his people think he has forgotten either them, or his cause on earth? For he is never weary or faint, but on the contrary always has strength and succor to give to the needy (vs. 27-31).

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

O Zion, thine own God saith, "Comfort ye my people." He says not merely, I will give thee comfort, but let all my prophets proclaim it; let all the sons and daughters of Zion take up this glorious refrain in words of cheerful hope and each speak comfort and consolation to all.—The pronouns here are richly suggestive: "*Your* God saith;" "comfort *my* people." In every way God recognizes the precious relations between himself and his people.—"Speak ye *to the heart* of Jerusalem" (Hebrew and English margin); say things that will touch her heart, and be sure to say them in such a way that they will go to her heart. "Proclaim unto her that her *warfare* is finished;" but *what* "warfare?"—The inquiry is specially important because it will help to disclose the central theme of this chapter, and to answer the question, *what* "*coming* of the Lord" is this which is made prominent here?—The original word often means "warfare," considered as a *prescribed* service and also as hard and onerous, approximating to bondage. It is used (Num. 4: 23, and 8: 24, 25) of the laborious service required of certain classes of Levites during the years of mature physical vigor, *i. e.*, in one case from thirty years of age to fifty; in the other from twenty-five to fifty. It is easy to see that in a ritual which required the slaughter of animals by hundreds and thousands, and this moreover, not in some secluded spot near running water, but in the very precincts of the sanctuary, in the heart of a great city, there must be a vast amount of hard service requi-

site for the comfort and health of the assembled worshipers. This service was quite analogous to a bondage or a warfare with reference to these two features, viz., a service *prescribed* and *laborious*. Courses or relays of men performed it in succession, and the service was thoroughly *hard*. It is not strange therefore that terms applied to the service of the soldier or of the slave should be applied to this. The whole system was spoken of by Paul as a "bondage," a "yoke" which the fathers were scarcely able to bear. See Gal. 4: 9, 25, and 5: 1, and Acts 15: 10, and Col. 2: 14, 20. — Thus the terms "bondage" and "warfare" became associated with the sacrificial system considered as involving a great amount of hard disagreeable service—a bondage to rites, which but for their spiritual significance would have been scarcely tolerable. Hence when no longer needed for the sake of that significance, it was a comfort and a joy to lay them aside even as when the slave lays off his yoke of bondage, or the soldier is discharged from his finished warfare. Moreover in a broadly comprehensive view of the Mosaic compared with the Christian dispensation, the former was much like bondage, the latter like freedom; the former was a sort of warfare, the latter like peace after war. And if we may suppose the emergence from captivity in Babylon to their national home in Palestine to underlie the prophet's conception of this great transition, then it may be said that as the nation came out of that bondage into national freedom, so should Zion come forth from the Mosaic burdens and imperfections to the liberty and completeness of the gospel system. It is, therefore, a fair construction which interprets our text of the passing away of the ancient ritual system to give place to one far less onerous, and far more rich and joyous. This construction is specially commended to our regard by its natural adaptation to the context, as will soon appear.—"Her iniquity is pardoned." The Hebrew gives the sense of being *paid off*, *satisfied*, so that favor and mercy are shown her notwithstanding her former sins. Remarkably the original word means primarily, to be acceptable, pleasing, and hence conveys strongly the idea of merciful favor, superseding and following the displeasure felt toward her previous sinning. Does it not look directly to the great idea of vicarious atonement by means of which God can safely show mercy to the chief of sinners when they become penitent and believing?—That "she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins," can not mean that the evils sent of God upon her have been in excess; twice as much as she justly deserved; but must be taken as a strong form of saying that those inflictions have been ample—have fully satisfied the exigencies of the divine government—and she need not fear their longer continuance.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.



4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Many commentators have referred this passage primarily to the return of the exiles from Babylon, claiming that the real thought is, prepare the way for the Lord to go before his people across the desert in this great restoration to their own land. Some of these interpreters, out of deference to Matthew (3: 3), and Mark (1: 3), and to Luke (3: 4-6), would concede that these words of Isaiah apply to John Baptist in a secondary, typical way. Another class of interpreters apply not only these verses (3-5), but the entire passage (vs. 1-11) to the opening events of the gospel age.—Much may be said for each of these theories because each has some truth in it. It seems to me that these theories, though apparently at first view conflicting, are harmonized with each other and with the conditions of the case by the theory that the return from the exile is not so much *predicted* as *assumed*—that the prophet is borne forward to take his stand-point of vision in the midst of that restoration so as to see it not so much future as present. Hence it became a pertinent source of imagery and illustration by which to set forth the real thing which is the burden of his message; the transition from Judaism to Christianity; the actual coming of John Baptist as the harbinger and of Jesus as the grand embodiment of the glories of the gospel age. In this view the whole passage receives an easy, natural, and pertinent exposition, in harmony moreover with the allusions made to it in the New Testament. We shall see this more in detail as we proceed.—We may notice that the captivity to Babylon had been already predicted (39: 6, 7), and virtually assumed (chaps. 13 and 14); and therefore the restoration therefrom might be the more readily assumed here; and further, that the references to the special agencies employed of God in this restoration (41: 2, 3, and 44: 26-28, and 45: 1-4) are remarkably *incidental*—not as if the prophet were directly predicting an event not previously in mind, but rather speaking of an event already assumed as certain, even if not indeed yet actually present. Some particular facts connected with it (*e. g.*, God's use of Cyrus) are therefore fitly referred to, inasmuch as they illustrate richly his power over even wicked men to make of them instruments for his purposes. Yet the reader will note here that Babylon is not named nor the exile, nor the restoration to Palestine.—On the other hand, the New Testament refers this passage directly and explicitly to the preaching of John the Baptist, as the great work which was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Remarkably the three earlier gospel historians, Matthew, Mark and Luke, have but one voice to



this point, and that is entirely explicit: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness,'" etc., Matt. 3: 3, and Mark 1: 3, 4, and Luke 3: 4-6. • To this event then we are bound to apply this prophecy. This "revealing of the glory of the Lord" is that which was made by the incarnation, the earthly life, the divine teachings and the vicarious death of the Son of God. For this is distinctively and superlatively *the* great revealing of God's glory to men—far more signal and complete than any other, and, therefore, with high probability this is *the* manifestation of God which is primarily in view here. The teachings of the New Testament on this point are exceedingly full and explicit. Remarkably all its leading writers concur in describing the incarnation of Jesus as being "*God manifested in the flesh*," and as a revealing of the glory of God. For example see John 1: 14. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. See also John 13: 31, and 17: 4. Paul presents the same view forcibly, *e. g.*, in 2 Cor. 3: 18 where the thought is that Christ having appeared in the flesh, "we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord." See also 2 Cor. 4: 4, 6, and Heb. 1: 3.—This filling up of the valleys, this leveling down of the mountains and hills, this making the crooked straight and the rough smooth—figures drawn from the preparation demanded by an oriental monarch from his people for his convenience in travelling over a rough country where roads were unknown—may well mean precisely the repentance, and reformation of the people, the putting away of their sins, and so removing every obstacle to the effectual coming and the welcome reception of their great King and Savior, the Messiah. John translated these figures into plain speech when he cried, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Your own great spiritual King is soon to appear. He comes to take away transgression. Repent ye, therefore, that your sins may be forgiven, and your souls be blessed in his coming. The spiritual obstacles in the way of his coming with blessings, are beautifully compared to the physical obstacles to travel in wild, mountainous regions. As therefore, in oriental countries and ancient times, a herald was sent forward to announce that the king was coming and to give the people notice to level the hills, fill the valleys, make the crooked straight, and the rough plain, so for Christ's personal coming a preparation very analogous to this was requisite in the sinful hearts of the people.—Instead of "crooked" the original is better expressed by the rendering, "The uneven shall be made smooth;" which indeed is essentially the meaning in all these various expressions.—That "all flesh shall see it together," implies that it should be a manifestation of God for all the world to see, in which they should all have a personal interest, since it would not be restricted to one nation alone, like the manifestations of

God to the ancient Jews.—It comes because God has promised it. Jesus Messiah had been the grand theme of promise and of prophecy.—The reader will notice that the broad, universal expressions used here carry the mind naturally if not even necessarily to something far more vast in its range and scope than the restoration from Babylon.

6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.

This revelation is made to the prophet in a boldly dramatic way. He hears two voices. The first says, *cry*. The second responds, "What shall I cry?" The first answers, giving him his message.—The point made in these three verses is that God's word of promise is sure of accomplishment. Men may fail, but God never. The generations of men pass away: there are no passing generations in the eternal life of God. Men may prove untrue, and for this reason their words may fail; but God is forever truthful, and therefore both fully disposed and richly able to make good every word he hath spoken.—"All flesh is grass;" short-lived, perishing. "Goodliness" should rather be *goodness*, this being clearly the sense of the original which is frequently used of the goodness and mercy of God, his kindness and real benevolence. Here the meaning is that man has but too little of this quality of pure benevolence. Its manifestations in him are sadly transient. Man's moral beauty as well as his physical is fading.—In v. 7 we must not think of "the spirit of the Lord" as being the third person of the Trinity. It is rather the *breath* of the Lord that blows upon man considered in figure as being the summer grass. Man, seen under this figure, withers beneath the breath of the Lord, as in oriental countries grass withers before the scorching south wind.—The Apostle Peter has left on record his comment upon the last clause of v. 8: "The word of our God shall stand forever." He speaks (1 Eps. 1: 23-25) of Christians as "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." He then quotes portions of the passage before us, and adds, "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." That is, he takes this "word" in its broad sense, comprehending those great spiritual truths, fundamental to salvation, which the Spirit employs in regeneration. He manifestly contemplates the truths, not as promises, but as facts. The prophet thinks of them as promise. And yet there is not the

least incongruity in these apparently diverse conceptions of "the word of God." For those very gospel truths which were facts to Peter were promise to Isaiah. They dawned on the race first in the light and form of promise. In the personal advent of the Messiah, they were fulfilled, and then became realized facts; the gospel word preached everywhere. Peter and Isaiah, therefore, think of the same "word of the Lord," and since we know that Peter's *word* is the gospel, we infer with certainty that Isaiah's *word also refers to the great truths of the gospel*. This becomes another clew to the drift of thought in this chapter, aiding us to answer the great question, "*To what coming of the Lord does this chapter refer?*"

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

The phrase, "that bringeth good tidings," is in Hebrew but a single word (a participle), for which we have no better equivalent than *evangelist*, one who *is bringing good tidings*. The English margin intimates (rightly) that the original may bear either of these two constructions, viz: "O thou evangelist, Zion" [in apposition]; or, "O thou evangelist [sent] to Zion;" i. e., thou who art Zion's evangelist—a messenger of glad news *to* Zion. In the former construction the command would apply to the first Apostles, the gospel preachers sent forth by Christ through all the cities of Judah; in the latter, to the angelic heralds who at a yet earlier point first proclaimed the glad news of a Savior born, bringing "peace on earth and good will to men." The former construction was preferred by the translators of our accepted version, and has specially in its favor the fact that the first disciples rather than the angelic heralds were sent expressly over all the cities of Judah, while the herald angels were sent only to Zacharias (Luke 1: 11-17); to Mary (Luke 1: 26-33); and to the shepherds (Luke 2: 9-14). Inasmuch as the words of Isaiah admit either construction, the testimony from historic fulfillment may be allowed to decide the question.—The passage, Isaiah 41: 27, "I, the Alpha [the great First One], give to Jerusalem an evangelist" [a herald of glad tidings], is analogous, but not strictly parallel. The Hebrew reader would observe that in this last cited passage the word for evangelist is masculine, while in Isaiah 40: 9, it is feminine, agreeing in gender with the words Zion and Jerusalem. On the other hand the evangelist sent (Isaiah 41: 17) to Jerusalem being masculine, naturally refers to the angelic heralds. In the nature of the case God must first give the gospel to Zion, and then require her to publish it. First, angels brought the glad news from heaven; then Jesus and his disciples took it up to publish, first in order to all the cities of Judah, and then, by his divine behest, over all the world, to

every creature. The reader will observe that this limitation to "the cities of Judah" in the first great missionary commission corresponds precisely to the historic facts. Jesus himself traversed this very region and no other with the gospel message, and also commissioned the twelve, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles.... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10: 5, 6, 23). A positive restriction lay upon transcending these limits till the gospel had first been preached as said here "to the cities of Judah."—A grand, magnificent summons is this to preach the glad tidings of the divine Savior come at last! The ages had been waiting in anxious expectation and long deferred hope: now let the daughters of Zion themselves become evangelists, and ascending the highest hill-tops of the land lift up their voice with strength and proclaim, "Behold your God!" Let them not fear any longer delay; let them think no more of possible failure! The blessed reality breaks forth upon the eyes of men! Let joy and praise fill all hearts!—The reader will also notice that while this passage describes the gospel age and its scenes most precisely, it does not by any means so well fit the age or the events of the restoration from Babylon. For what pertinence could there be in sending the heralds of that event to "all the cities of Judah," when, in fact, there was not one peopled city in all Judah—the whole land having been waste seventy years? And, moreover, for the scenes of the restoration from Babylon, the grand announcement made here; "Behold your God!" is too strong; means too much.—Hence, inasmuch as this verse applies perfectly to the gospel history, but not fitly to the restoration from Babylon, it adds another proof to the accumulating evidence that "the coming of God" in this chapter is specially the advent of Messiah in human flesh.

10. Behold, the LORD God will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

The reader will notice that the word "hand" is in italics, to indicate that it is not found in the Hebrew text. It can not be supplied here because its gender forbids. The best construction is, "Behold, the Lord God will come *in the person of a strong One*." This is to be a manifestation of God among men of *great power*, embodying the infinite force—the boundless resources, of Almighty God. It may perhaps be tacitly contrasted with the inferior manifestations of God made in the earlier ages. The next clause shows that this strong One is "Ruler in Israel." See Micah 5: 2, where the same word occurs, said of the Messiah. Hence, this passage must speak of the Messiah as King.—That he does not come for nought; that his mission can not be a failure, is indicated next. "His reward is with him," present, and not merely in the remote

and uncertain future. The word rendered "work" is also here the *reward* of his work, the clause being strictly parallel with the one preceding.—So it was "for the joy set before him that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12: 2). Such self-sacrificing benevolence is largely its own reward.—In what direction this joyous reward lay, and in what sort of work it was bound are indicated in the next verse.

11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

This is the earliest distinct application of this figure of the shepherd to the Messiah. It stands here in its blended beauty and strength, exceedingly rich in its points of analogy and tenderly precious in its great moral lessons.—To the Jews, familiar with all the details and therefore comprehending perfectly the significance of shepherd life, this comparison must have been intensely rich and expressive.—The Hebrew word translated "feed," includes also the idea of *ruling* as well. The shepherd not only fed, but led, directed, *ruled* his flock—always determining for them when and in what direction they were to move on for fresh pasture; when they should go forth from their fold in the morning, and when return as the day closed. Absolutely their whole life was under his supreme direction.—The prophet makes this shepherd's care of the young beautifully prominent. He gathers them in his arms and bears them in his bosom. Knowing their weakness, he will not expose them to excessive fatigue, nor to injuries that might prove serious. He loves them and has a warm-hearted interest in their welfare. So Jesus loves the feeble ones of his fold, whether the young in years or the morally weak and frail.—The class last described are the mothers of the flock, the Hebrew word having the special significance (according to the English margin) of *giving suck*. The condition of maternity brings special weaknesses; the Good Shepherd adapts his care of them accordingly.—On the word rendered, "gently lead," most commentators assent to this translation; but Hengstenberg insists strenuously that it means, to *sustain*, in the sense of supplying food. The difference is much more in name than in fact, since the shepherd's only way of sustaining in the sense of supplying with food was to *lead them* out over their pasture grounds. Precisely this is the nomadic life, leading the flock on and on from the old pastures evermore to new ones. The shepherd's care would appear in his not pushing the ewes and lambs too hard. Note Jacob's care on this point. (Gen. 33: 13, 14).—In reference to the application of this figure of the shepherd to Jesus the Messiah, the reader may note that Isaiah has the same idea and some of the same phraseology in chap. 49: 9, 10. "They shall feed in the ways, and their pasture shall be in all high places." "He that hath mercy on them shall lead

them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." Ezekiel (chaps. 34, and 37: 24) expands this figure fully, putting the Messiah in the strongest contrast with the corrupt religious teachers whose influence had been fearfully destructive to the people. Then our Lord appropriates to himself this beautifully descriptive figure, saying with special reference to these prophecies, "I am *the good shepherd*;" not merely, "I am *a shepherd*, and not merely, I am *the shepherd*; but yet more specifically, "I am *the good shepherd*;" the same whose good qualities were so fully presented by Isaiah and whose life was put in such expressive contrast with the evil shepherds by Ezekiel. See John 10: 11, 14, 27.—Here we have another incidental point of no trifling importance, showing that Jesus the Messiah is the central personage in this chapter.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

He who gives comfort and strength to Zion is himself omnipotent. This sublimely grand portrayal of God as Almighty and All-wise continues nearly to the close of this chapter, and then comes to its point of practical application in the great truth; *Almighty to give strength and succor to his people*, and therefore a legitimate object of supreme trust.—It is a question of no small interest whether the mind of the Spirit is here upon the Messiah, or only in general upon God, without special reference to the Son of God as manifested for the help of his people. Assuming the passage to refer to the Messiah, we should connect it closely with the preceding context, as "the *strong one*" of v. 10, in whose person the Lord God comes in this special manifestation; also with v. 9, as the personage whose coming is announced to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" and also with v. 11, the thought here being that although this good Shepherd is exceedingly sympathetic, tender-hearted, and kindly considerate of the weaknesses and frailties of his people, and specially regardful of the tender lambs, yet, wonderful to say, he is the Almighty and the ineffably glorious God! I see no valid objection to this view. The New Testament most decidedly represents the Son of God as Creator of all worlds. Creatorship is made prominent here.

The questions in this passage, "*Who hath measured*" etc., carry their own answer with resistless force, *None but God!* Surely none can do these things but the Almighty God!—The reader should notice that the measures named here are small relatively even to man. The hollow hand of man holds but little; God's hollow hand holds the waters of our globe. The "span" is one of the shortest lineal measures known; but the span in God's hand quite suffices to take the dimensions of the starry heavens.

he "measure" here is one-third part of an ephah and not essentially varying from the English peck measure, yet God's hand grasps in his "measure" the solid matter of our globe. The steel-yards and the scales suffice to give us the weight of things which we readily handle, but God's scales weigh the mountains! What conceptions are these of the vastness of his power and of the infinite ease with which he controls the material universe!

13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or *teaching* his counsellor hath taught him?

14. With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

As v. 12 sets before us God's infinite power, these verses present his boundless knowledge and matchless wisdom. The form of putting this great truth is by the question, Who has ever taught him a thing unknown to him before? Who so wise as to be his counsellor, or as to give him one ray of light, one item, however small, of knowledge?—The word for "directed" is the same which is translated "meted out" in the sense of measured, in v. 12. The sense therefore must be, Who has measured the divine intelligence? Who has ever estimated the amount of his knowledge, or of his capacity for knowing?—The last clause is future, "Or *teaching* his counsellor, *shall teach him*!"—Paul quotes from this passage (Rom. 11: 34), "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" and then adds as if it were a further thought of his own, "Or who hath first given to him, and it hath been recompensed to him again?" That is who hath been his paid teacher, imparting valuable information, and then receiving his reward for services rendered?—V. 14 turns the thought to present it in new aspects, mainly thus: Whom has God taken into his special confidence to ask counsel of him, and this counsellor has consequently taught him in respect to justice and wisdom?

15. Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he maketh up the isles as a very little thing.

Here is still another view of the greatness of God. The prophet first compared him with the universe of matter, in which the ocean waters are to him only a handful; next with the universe of created mind, challenging the whole of it to produce a thought new to God, or a suggestion that could add to his wisdom; and next, he measures God (so to speak) against the *nations* of men. They are to him only as the drop hanging from the bucket—a mere drop of water; or as the small dust whose weight on the



scales is entirely inappreciable.—Mark, see, he taketh up the islands as a mere atom! What are whole nations of men; what are whole continents of matter, before him!—This mode of presenting God's thoughts of man should by no means be wrested so as to teach or imply that God is reckless of the happiness of men and of the well-being of nations, thinking no more of it than we do of the small dust of the balance. The prophet means nothing of this sort. The inditing Spirit intended no such inference as this. The incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh and his sufferings even unto death for the good of this race should suffice to disprove this inference and explode forever this false view of God's thoughts and feelings as to our race. His meaning here is only that *in point of greatness and glory*, God is conscious of being exalted infinitely above man. When men in their vain pride think to compare themselves with the great God, he wishes them to see that he is infinitely above them, and that *he knows it*. He is perfectly conscious of the vastness of his being and of the glory of his own perfections.

16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

Nor can all Lebanon supply wood or animals adequate to his dignity and worth. The offering of sacrifices indicates the exalted dignity of the personage to whom they are presented. But Lebanon, noble and grand as its forests are, could not supply the fuel, nor all its beasts, the animals, for a worthy offering to the great Jehovah. The glory of his being towers high in point of merit and worth above any such manifestations of regard and reverence. The meaning is that all such expressions are utterly inadequate to represent justly God's ineffable majesty and glory.

17. All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

The thought is essentially the same as in v. 15. The statements however are stronger. There the phrase is "nations;" here "all nations." There they are compared to a drop of water, or to fine particles of dust; here they are declared to be nothing at all in his regard. As to power, dignity and glory in comparison with his own, he accounts them a mere nothing, and even, if this be supposable, *less than nothing at all*.

18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

With whom or with what can the great God be compared? Where can one find a unit of measurement which can be applied to him to aid us in estimating adequately his infinite nature and attributes?—The second clause asks what object can be placed by the side of him for the purpose of comparison.



19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the oldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

The connection of thought with the verse previous I take to be, to ye answer the question, What object can be compared with God, by naming a graven image? Will ye compare the great God to an image carved of wood? The position of this word for image," at the head of the sentence, suggests this connection, thus: The image of an idol god—is *that* the thing which ye would compare with the great Jehovah? Then, as usual with the prophets, he amplifies the thought that these god-images are merely things of human workmanship. First, the carver cuts it out of wood; then the smith plates it over with gold and provides silver chains to hold it steady in its position.—The English translation introduces some confusion by using the word "melteth" which applies only to an image of metal, with "graven" [carved] which equally applies only to an image of wood. Wood should have the reference here because only such were plated over with gold, and because the workman named here is a carpenter, working in wood. Hence the word rendered "melteth" should read carveth.—It is not easy to conceive a stronger illustration of the ineffable folly of man than this supposition that the mighty God can be represented by a wooden image, carved ever so skillfully, plated with gold ever so magnificently, and chained up with silver chains ever so firmly! —The question, Will ye compare God to such an image? tacitly implies that men had done this—that, with no little pains-taking and mechanical skill, they had constructed and embellished such images for the purpose of representing the one Almighty and Infinite God.—In the light of such views of God as Isaiah has been representing, how besotted, how insane, men must be to think that such a wooden image can in any sense represent the great Creator and Lord of all.

20. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree *that* will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.

The first words, descriptive of the person spoken of, are not very clear. The man "impoverished of donation," or offering (which is the form of the Hebrew sentence), may however well be taken in the sense, impoverished *by* his votive offerings already made; the man who has exhausted himself by his outlays in idol worship; who, since he cannot afford an image of costly metal, will choose the most durable wood, and then get a skillful workman, and have special pains taken to brace or chain his god so that he can stand upright and not fall! It is a case of very earnest devotion to his idol gods, but only heightens our sorrow and

shame that human ignorance, weakness and sin, can sink so low; that man can be so deluded, and withal so ineffably void of sense! —The Hebrew words, "to *prepare* a graven image that cannot be moved," look not so much to its construction as to its being *firmly set* by extra supports, nails, or chains.

21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

The first two interrogatives are in the future tense, and should be read accordingly; *Will ye not know? i. e., Will ye never have the sense and the honesty to understand that the great God who built the heavens and the earth cannot be like your images of wood and stone? Hath it not been set before you [Hebrew] from the beginning (when God created the heavens and the earth, Gen. 1: 1), and have ye not understood this from the very creation itself? The sentiment here is that of Paul (Rom. 1: 19, 20) that God's invisible attributes are clearly seen in the works of creation, even his eternal power and Godhead. See also Acts 14: 15, 17, and 17: 29.—"Understood from the foundation of the earth," might mean either from that fact as one that evinces infinite power and wisdom; or ever since that event, inasmuch as its testimony has been before all human eyes from that day to this. Both ideas are involved, that of time taking the lead; in harmony with the parallel clause, "from the beginning."*

22. *It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:*

The English marginal reading is admissible, connecting this verse closely with the preceding; "Have ye not understood"—"*him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, high above upon its grand concave sphere, and all its population are only as grasshoppers before him; who also spreads out the visible heavens above us as men would stretch out a tent-curtain for their humble abode?*"

23. That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

These verses add still another point in this magnificent comparison of the Omnipotent God with his various works. He has

been compared with the material universe; with all nations; with graven images; with all the inhabitants of the earth; and now with their princes and judges. How easily can he reduce them to nothing; break down their power; lay their glory in the dust! Yea, ere they are planted and sown and ere they have taken firm root, he only blows upon them, and they wither away. What time they think to bear themselves proudly, he shows himself to be infinitely above them. So suddenly does he blast them, and with infinite ease! They cannot even get a footing upon which they can measure their strength against God.

25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

The special epithet by which God designates himself should be noted. Where we might expect some of those names of God which signify omnipotence, or perhaps power in combination with wisdom and majesty, these points being made specially prominent in this passage (vs. 12-26), we really have neither of these, but this only—“*the Holy One*.” Does holiness represent here the moral nature of the infinite God, and does this name in this connection imply that God values himself for his holiness more than for all else in his being and perfections? Or shall we take the term “holy” in its original sense—that which is separate, set apart and distinctive—and hence understand by it here only, the *separate One*; he who is in every respect high above and unlike all creatures? Standing here near the close of an extended comparison of God with his various works, material and immaterial, the latter seems most in harmony with the context. The former construction, if legitimate, would imply what is no doubt true; but it is not for that reason *the truth* taught here.

26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that *he* is strong in power; not one faileth.

Walk abroad in a cloudless, moonless night; lift up your eyes and note the starry host above; think who made them all; think how he marshals them in their order as the general of an army does his squadrons; how he calls them by their names, and through the greatness of his power not one of them drops out of his place or fails to move evermore in his orbit; and then say if this scene does not witness to the vastness of Jehovah's power and to the infinite glory of his being? Is not this great God able to save to the uttermost those who put their trust in him?

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,

My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

"My way" is my course of life and here especially my life of suffering, trial. "My judgment," is strictly my *cause* considered as being in court, before the judges, but scarcely securing any attention—passed over without regard. The Lord asks his people why they will persist in saying (the original is future tense), God has forgotten me; he has lost sight of my cause and thinks me too insignificant to be noticed. Consider how he knows and calls each star by name and never takes his eye from one of the least of all his works. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father;" and "are not ye of more value than many sparrows?" (Mat. 10: 29, 31.)—This phase of human experience is tenderly yet forcibly rebuked both by the prophet and by his greater Lord.

28. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is no* searching of his understanding.

The point here is that the great God, Creator of all, who takes care of the universe with infinite ease, will never be weary and faint in the care of his people. The rhetoric of the passage is full of beauty and strength. "Hast thou not known this most obvious truth? Hast thou never heard this said?"—Stress is appropriately laid on his being everlasting in the infinitude of his existence, the Creator of all, and no less their Infinite Lord and Ruler. —That his understanding baffles all efforts to search it out is said here, either to fill out the sum of his infinite qualities or to intimate that he must surely understand the case and the wants of his people, or perhaps to suggest that there may be things in his administration that seem to us inscrutable and even objectionable, which since we cannot fathom his purposes, we do well to accept as doubtless right and good because God does them, and only doubtful in appearance to us because our searching fails to comprehend God's understanding.

29. He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

A God of so much power can readily supply the wants of his weak and frail creatures—a truth purposely applied here to the frailties of his people. He knows how to minister to their necessities.

30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

The best of human vigor will tire—that of young men in their prime, such as are chosen for war (the sense of the Hebrew) will by no means endure unremitted tension. Put to such a task, it soon grows weak, flags, and fails. But they that wait upon God, not here in the sense of *service*, but of *trustful faith*, shall renew their strength. Faith is to them what rest, sleep and food are to the physical frame, and even more; for they grow yet stronger and stronger. They lift the pinion like the eagle (which seems to be the precise sense of the original); the stroke of their wing is with amazing power, and withal approximates more nearly to an untiring vigor than aught else known to us within the range of animal power. Some have supposed an allusion to the eagle as renewing its feathers (moulting) at certain stages of its life. The reference to its bold, lofty, and almost tireless flight is much more probable, more in accordance with the language, and not less pertinent to the point to be illustrated.—So God breathes his own tireless strength into the souls of those who trustfully rest in him. He knows how to make his strength perfect in human weakness. The grace that he supplies solves the Christian paradox, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Through such grace, in response to such faith, the Christian life goes on from strength to strength, from victory to other victories evermore yet greater, rising triumphant over successive temptations, and at last coming off more than conqueror through him that hath loved and therefore never fails to help.—It is implied here that Zion will need faith in God during the long delay intervening before her Lord shall come; yet that the foundation laid in the character of her God for such faith, is most ample, and the fruits of such faith will be inexpressibly rich, sustaining and triumphant.—Thus closes this wonderfully rich and beautiful chapter. Accepting it as revealing primarily and directly the opening scenes and the distinctive glories of the gospel age, resting (so to speak) upon the assumed restoration from Babylon as the underlying conception in some of its figures, the whole becomes intensely graphic and luxuriantly rich in its revelations. The soul of the gospel is the soul and the life of this chapter. Its great central truth is, *The Son of God becoming manifest in human flesh—the Redeemer and the saving strength of his trusting people.*

## CHAPTER XLI.

THE central truths of this chapter are that God will protect and bless his own people, and will overpower and put out of the way their enemies. In portions of the chapter an air of vivacity and life is imparted by the conception of a grand tribunal or court for trying the issue of right and power between God and his enemies—the Almighty challenging his enemies to come forward and substantiate their claims to supremacy and divinity, and to show by what right they are in revolt and rebellion against his throne; at the same time, setting forth his claims in opposition to theirs.

1. Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew *their* strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

The chapter opens with the summons, "Stand in reverential silence before me, all ye of distant "lands" ["islands"]; I have said that my people who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength (40:31); but to you I say, Renew your strength as best you can, girding yourselves for the pending conflict with whatever force and energy you can command. Thus girded, let them come near to me and then speak; yea, let us come together to *the* grand judgment-seat—the place for testing the relative merits and claims of God and of his enemies.

2. Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings? he gave *them* as the dust to his sword, *and* as driven stubble to his bow.

Who has done such a thing as this which I have done in raising up Cyrus, making him a mighty conqueror, and ultimately, the deliverer and patron of my captive people? This is the first point brought forward in the test-trial of prerogatives and mighty deeds.—The English version approximates toward the general sense of the first part of the verse, yet without fully representing the original. Neither the Hebrew words nor the accents will bear the rendering, "the righteous man." The

Hebrew has the abstract, "righteousness," yet in a connection which demands the sense of *justice* personified and made an active power, thus: "Who raised up" [one] "from the east? Justice shall call him to his feet" [to go before him and obey his behests], "and shall put nations before him and shall make him rule over kings." It was God, the just Avenger of his people, acting as the genius or personification of justice, who raised up Cyrus and gave him his great power.—The last clause indicates the tremendous energy of his arms. God will make the nations as dust before his sword, etc.—Abruptly the first question, "Who raised up," etc., breaks off before it is fully expressed and the Lord answers it by putting in the foreground the idea that his own avenging justice was aroused to bring out a mighty conqueror for the deliverance of his people.—"Called him to his foot" is the Hebrew phrase for service and especially in war. "Barak (Judges 4: 10) went up with ten thousand men *at his feet*."

3. He pursued them, *and* passed safely; *even* by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.

This is the briefest possible history of the wars of Cyrus, pursuing his fleeing enemies and still passing on with safety to himself, for no nation made an effective stand against him. The last clause expresses the amazing rapidity of his movements by saying that he did not seem to pass over the road with his feet, but rather to *fly*, as Daniel says of the he-goat, *i. e.*, Alexander and his Greeks; "He came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and *touched not the ground*." Literally this passage reads, "A way [or path] he will not come over with his feet." Usually the great conquerors of history have been distinguished for the celerity of their movements.

4. Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I *am* he.

Who hath done this great work of raising up such a conqueror; and moreover, who has ever predicted such events from the very beginning, before any developments appeared to afford the least basis for human sagacity?—"Calling the generations from the beginning" is probably to be taken in the sense of proclaiming the world's history before it became fact, rather than in the sense of calling generations into existence. The context gives great prominence to *prophecy* as one of the sublime prerogatives of Jehovah. The Lord "called the generations" in the sense of naming the men and revealing their history, long before they appeared within the horizon of human view.—"I, the

Lord, the first" [before all others in the order of existence] "and coeval with the last," i. e., whose existence runs on like that of those moral beings whom he has endowed with immortality. No other being save God can claim to have existed *from eternity*. In that direction he stands first and alone.—The last clause means, I am he who hath wrought this achievement, first predicting Cyrus and then raising him up for his work.—Before we pass on, it should be said that interpreters have differed widely in their exposition of these three verses (2–4), some applying them to Abraham; others to Jesus Christ. My reasons for applying the passage to Cyrus and not to Abraham, or to the Messiah, are (1.) The descriptive features given here, by fair construction of the language, are not found in either Abraham or Christ. (2.) Explained legitimately, they appear readily in Cyrus. (3.) They correspond entirely with the description of the same person drawn in v. 25 of this chapter, and also in chaps. 44 : 26–28, and 45 : 1–5, where the person is manifestly the same, with the same general features of character and history, and his very name is given—Cyrus. These circumstances suffice to make the case entirely clear.

5. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

Bearing in mind that in v. 1 God challenges the idolatrous world considered as in rebellion against himself, to a public investigation of their mutual claims to the supremacy of the universe, we shall readily take vs. 2–4 as the first point made on the side of the Almighty. Who first predicted and then brought out Cyrus; and made him one of the greatest conquerors, and used him for the salvation of his own captive people?—Now the discourse turns to speak of the opposite party and to show how they felt under this summons; how they were impressed by this first point—the case of Cyrus; and how they came forward in obedience to the summons; and then (vs. 6, 7) how they rallied their courage and set themselves with fresh zeal to work up some new idol gods!—The "isles"—the same term which describes the challenged party (v. 1), saw God coming down to confront them in their rebellion and put them on trial, and *they were afraid!* The "ends of the earth" (parallel and corresponding to the "isles") were afraid, but as they could not evade the summons, they "drew near and came."—Thus it often happens. So long as wicked men can forget God, they manage to live in comparative comfort in their ways of sin; but when he calls them to give account of themselves—when he says, "Let us come near together to the judgment" (v. 1), they are filled with irrepressible consternation. Alas, they had not thought



his! They had made no provision for meeting God thus in judgment!

6. They helped every one his neighbour; and *every* said to his brother, Be of good courage.

7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, *and* that smootheth *with* the hammer him that smote thevil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved.

Now the time has come for the idolatrous nations of the world to bring forward their idol gods and invoke them to show their prowess and to measure arms with the Almighty. The then world are summoned to show cause why they have given their homage to Baal and Moloch, to Merodach or to Jupiter. It might therefore be supposed that the prophet would actually lift the curtain at this point and show us idolaters by a million falling on their faces before their gods and crying, Baal, hear us; save us, all ye gods, and make your power known in this searching, eventful crisis!" But this is not what he does. He presents them in a very different light from this. Instead of falling back upon their gods as already existent and strong to save, they set themselves to make new god-images. Very courageous they are, each man screwing up his own courage and helping his neighbor's courage as well; and so they push the operation forward, now through the hand of this workman, and then of that, till at length the senseless thing is well put together and well fastened up with nails so that it can not otherwise than stand up! And this represents the preparation which heathen nations make to meet the Almighty and show cause why they have rebelled against their great Maker and given the confidence and love of their heart to idols! The passage is put with the keenest sarcasm, and yet with stinging truth. We can deny that these idolatrous sinners have done their best. They have made their best possible showing and defense. Alas, but it should so fitly set forth the ineffable folly of all sinning, of every sinner!

8. But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9. *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth I called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, thou *art* my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10. Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help

thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

In vs. 8 and 9, the Lord accosts his people and describes them, showing what he has done for them. In v. 10 he reaches the substance of what he would say—an exhortation to dismiss all fear and be assured that as God *had* helped them, so he would still. V. 9 refers specially to God's calling the seed of Abraham out from among idolaters (see Joshua 24: 2), gathering them from remote lands, Mesopotamia, or Egypt, or perhaps with allusion to both.—The phrase, "called thee from the *chief men* thereof," should rather be read, "from the sides thereof;" essentially parallel with the previous clause, "from the ends of the earth."—In v. 10, "Be not dismayed," means in the original, look not around on every side for other help as one affrighted, or conscious of no refuge.—The verbs, "I will strengthen," "I will help," "I will uphold;" are all in the past tense; I *have* strengthened, etc., designed to confirm their faith for the future by their experience of God's help in the past. It is therefore more than a mere promise. It is a guaranty drawn from the past and thrown forward upon the future—"The right hand of my righteousness," is my righteous right hand—my right hand which always executes my righteous will. God implies that his righteousness, in the sense of integrity, faithfulness, is committed to their protection.

11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought.

God will confound and even annihilate the enemies of his people. They are described as having been enraged against Zion as having striven and fought against her; but God will bring them utterly to nought, so that, though sought for, they shall not be found.

13. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Here are ample and rich promises of God's help. "Thou worm Jacob," signifies not only his inherent weakness for such a

conflict, but his personal demerit, his utter lack of intrinsic worth. "Not for your sake, be it known unto you, nor for your righteousness; but for my holy name's sake." See Ezek. 36: 32. There is but too much occasion to introduce this idea in connection with God's exceeding great and precious promises, lest his people should assume that their own personal merits lie at the foundation of God's discriminating mercies toward them.—The word "Redeemer" would suggest to a Jew the idea of his next friend, bound to step in and buy him off from servitude, or to buy in his real estate and hold it for him till he can recover it in a legal way. This use of the word may be seen in the statutes (Lev. 25: 25-27, 47-54). It is therefore a very expressive term to represent that glorious being who buys off his people from the penalty of the law and the bondage of sin, and gives back to them their lost prerogatives as the sons of God. Job (chap. 19: 25) and Isaiah in this passage apply the term to the Messiah.—Here also, as in v. 10, the true reading is, "*I have helped*"—this former help being appealed to as proof that God *will* help also in the future.

15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

God will make his people a mighty power to crush their foes. The sense is not, "I will make *for* thee such an instrument to use; but I will cause thee to be thyself such an instrument. The ancient threshing sledge was built of planks of which two or three might be attached together in the manner of a stone-boat, with the forward ends raised, and the bottom set with sharp pieces of stone or iron, projecting downward to cut the straw and beat out the grain. Drawn by draught animals and heavily weighted, it would be a savage instrument to drag over human flesh. Here the bold figure makes it thresh the mountains and beat them fine as dust, and then the people fan their threshed-out grain and the Lord's whirlwind scatters chaff and grain alike to the four winds—a clean and terrible destruction; in view of which the Lord's people exult in him as their strength in the day of battle. So Zion, made mighty through her God, exterminates her enemies. Sin arrayed against her in whatever form is utterly overthrown.

17. *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there*

is none *and* their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, *I* the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

This represents any extreme want. In torrid climates where so often water is scarce and doubly needful, the figure becomes specially forcible. The suffering from extreme thirst is fearful, and the demand for water consequently is intensely strong. Under such circumstances God comes to the relief of his needy people. In their extremity is his opportunity.—The word for “high places” means bare, unwooded hill-tops, in which mountain rock usually comes to the surface—the very places therefore where rivers can not be opened save by miracle. So also in the wilderness, *i. e.*, the sandy desert, God will make pools and gushing springs of water. Truly he never lacks resources to meet the wants of his people. Think of living fountains breaking forth all over the great Saharas of our desolate world! Is anything too hard for the Lord? See Isaiah 44: 3, which shows that this language refers to spiritual blessings.

19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, *and* the pine, and the box-tree together:

20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

He plants all the choicest trees in precisely the most unlikely situations, where you would least of all expect them. With trees, will return even to the ancient deserts, rains, vegetable growths, fertility, verdure and beauty.—God makes these extraordinary superhuman changes that all men may know that this is his almighty hand, working to new-create where need be, for the relief, comfort and joy of his trusting people.—Exegetically it matters but little what trees these are, save only that they are useful, beautiful, and such as do not naturally grow in the wilderness.—The “cedar” is well known, at home on Mount Lebanon, and of course not having the least affinity for the sandy desert. The “Shittah” is now regarded as the Acacia—large and valuable as producing the genuine gum arabic. The “oil-tree” is the wild olive. The word rendered “pine” is held by the latest authorities to be a very durable species of oak; and the box tree, a variety of the cedar, erect and lofty as its name indicates.

21. Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong *reasons*, saith the King of Jacob.

The conception of a public hearing as before a tribunal appears again. The Lord demands of his opponents that they do their best; bring forward their strongest proofs; and especially calls on them now to show if they have prescience of the future—the power of prophecy.

22. Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be at we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

The single point here is a challenge to produce a case of real prophecy. It may be a prediction previously made, but of events then appearing or about to appear; or a new prophecy first brought out at that time. Let them bring near and set before what shall happen, *i. e.*, in the future: "former things, what they are, show ye, and we will set our thoughts upon them and know their issue [their outcome or result], or proclaim things that to come." In the middle clause I take "former things," to antecedent prophecies already fulfilled which might at that time be appealed to, and the events be studied in connection with the alleged predictions. The Lord gives them the largest scope for producing a case of real prophecy. If they have none in all the past, let them try their hand upon it now if they like.

23. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

The challenge, "Do good, or do evil," we must consider as addressed to idol gods. Let them really show that they do anything, good or evil; and they shall have all credit for it. The application here—affirmed in the strongest form in v. 24—is that they are mere nothings, utterly powerless for any result, even the least possible, good or evil.—The word for "dismayed," here as in v. 10) has the meaning of *looking about* on all sides; here, as one in dismay; but here for the purpose of close and careful scrutiny.—"Behold it together," seems to assume a joint examination by both parties, as much as to say; we will unite in giving the case a candid and thorough examination.

24. Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is *he that* chooseth you.

This verse, and also v. 29, may be considered as the final ver-

dict of the grand assize. All the idol gods are proved to be mere nonentities.—It is not entirely clear whether the original words rendered “of nothing” and “of nought,” mean strictly, *of no power*, or *produced* from nothing, and therefore themselves mere nothings, or less than nothing; *i. e.*, more of nothing than nothing itself. The ultimate sense is substantially the same—the negation of all power and even of any real existence.—Whoever shall choose such nonentities for his gods is to be abhorred. He has prostituted his common sense through his hatred of the true God, and deserves no consideration.

25. I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar and as the potter treadeth clay.

The connection of thought is; ye—idol gods—have done nothing and can do nothing; but on the other hand, I, the Mighty One of Jacob, have done this signal and palpable thing—yet to be a great and well known fact of history. I first predict and then bring forth the great eastern conqueror, Cyrus.—This verse corresponds closely with vs. 2–4 above. Here he is said to come “from the north,” but it is also indicated that he is from the east as well; “from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name;” showing that no special stress is to be laid upon his local direction as being from the north precisely. The fact was that while the Medes came from the north of Babylon, the Persians were from the east.—The tenses closely rendered would be; “*I have raised*,” etc., and “*he has come*;” “*but he shall call upon my name*, etc., showing that the prophet speaks as from a stand-point in the midst of the unfinished transaction. This however is simply his *ideal* stand-point, due to prophetic vision, and not to the prophet’s actual point of time.—His “calling upon my name” may very properly be applied to his distinct recognition of the God of Israel in his great proclamation, Ezra 1: 1–4; “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia; the Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth,” etc.—See the figure of treading down nations as men tread mortar, chaps. 10: 6, and 25: 10.

26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.*

The question is put again; “Who of all the idol gods has ever given one real prophecy?” The verse may be closely

translated, "Who has declared [any thing] from the beginning, and we will know [it], and from before the event, and we will say, *right*" [it is true]. "Verily there has been no [such] revealer; verily no publisher; verily not one who has heard your word," *i. e.*, of real prediction.

27. The first *shall* say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.

The reader will scarcely get the sense of this verse unless he considers that "*the first*" is taken from v. 4, "I the Lord, *the first*." It corresponds precisely with Rev. 1: 17, and 2: 8, and 22: 13. "I am the Alpha and Omega." The *Alpha saith*, etc., Jehovah, the Alpha, "the first," said to Zion, "Behold, behold them," *i. e.*, behold these wonderful things yet to take place. The sense therefore is not, I was the first to make this prediction; but this: I, the great first Being, existing before all other beings and therefore Creator and Ruler of all, and amply qualified to reveal the future; I give my people these prophetic announcements.—The last clause, "I will give to Jerusalem an evangelist, a publisher of glad tidings," refers to chap. 40: 9. See notes there.

28. For I beheld, and *there was* no man; even among them, and *there was* no counsellor, that when I asked of them, could answer a word.

The English version seems to assume that the Lord has looked among the heathen gods for some wise man to give counsel or aid, but finds none; and assigns this as a reason for what he is said in the verse previous to have done.—A closer rendering will much improve the sense: "I *will* look" (*i. e.*, once more, to give the idol gods yet another trial), "but there is no one" [to attempt it]; "even of them all, there is none to speak wisdom."—The whole verse is remarkably elliptical. The last clause seems to mean; I will ask them yet again, and [perhaps] they will give back a word.

29. Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing: their molten images *are* wind and confusion.

But no; not the first word can be elicited from those senseless gods, even by the most reasonable call, the fairest opportunity, the most pressing exigency, or the most caustic sarcasm. They are utter vanity, mere nothings. Their molten images are only wind—void and empty as old chaos. The word rendered "confusion" is the same that Moses applies to chaos. (Genesis 1: 2.)

## CHAPTER XLII.

THE servant of the Lord is the central personage throughout this chapter. This phrase, "my servant," is first applied to the Messiah (vs. 1-4); his mission and work are to enlighten the Gentiles (vs. 5-7). The blessedness and joy of this stupendous change appear (vs. 8-16); consequently idol worshipers shall be confounded (v. 17); and are exhorted to open their long blinded eyes to behold this gospel light (v. 18). Now the people of the Lord appear also as his servant; they have strangely relapsed into moral blindness (vs. 19, 20); for which the Lord gives them up to chastisement and spoiling to reclaim them from their sins and to retrieve his own honor (vs. 21-25).

1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

It is vital to the just exposition of this chapter to fix the exact sense of the phrase, "my servant." With only these verses (1-4) before us, it might appear quite obvious that they refer simply and only to Jesus, the Messiah. That these verses refer to him primarily and legitimately, there can be no doubt. The citation of this entire passage by Matthew (12: 18-21) as a prophecy fulfilled in Christ, is itself ample authority, the more conclusive because the special point for which they are cited, viz., the quiet, modest bearing of Jesus in reference to his miracles as contrasted with the noisy, obtrusive, ostentatious pretensions of impostors generally, corresponds precisely with the strain of this prophecy.—Then, moreover, the first verse, "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;" "I have put my Spirit upon him;" is manifestly referred to in the scenes of the Savior's baptism, when the Holy Spirit fell visibly upon him, and a voice from heaven announced, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17). The same words were spoken again and distinctly heard at his transfiguration (Matt. 17: 5).—The reference of this phrase ("my servant") to the Messiah might be confirmed yet further by comparison with other Messianic prophecies where he bears this name, *e. g.*, chaps. 43: 10, and 49: 3, 6, and 52: 13, and 53: 11. All then would be very plain



and this view would seem to require no modification were it not for the demands of the context, both the preceding (41 : 8, 9) and the succeeding (42 : 19, 20). In both these passages it is manifest that *Israel* as the Lord's professed and chosen people, is also called "the servant of the Lord;" "my servant." Hence the phrases, "my servant" and "the servant of the Lord," must be used in a broadly comprehensive sense to include all those by whom the Lord works in promoting his kingdom in this revolted world; Jesus Christ, the head, and his people, the members, all together comprising one complex body. This view is not unfrequently presented in the New Testament. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you;" all alike sent forth on the same mission, to do various parts of the same great work.—It should also be noticed that this view is entirely in harmony with the scope of the previous chapter (41), the central idea of which is, God and his people *vs.* sin and its earthly champions; a grand antagonism in which the Almighty God is one party, working however with and through his Son and his redeemed people; and the nations of idolaters with all their idol gods are the other. Entirely in harmony with this strain of chap. 41, our present chapter expands more in detail the agents through whom the Lord works in this world; the manner and spirit of their work, and the results. In such a detailed account, the Messiah must of necessity be prominent. Hence the chapter speaks first of him. In the closing paragraph (vs. 19-25) his people are altogether in the foreground, this passage being entirely inapplicable to the Messiah, but painfully true of his people, especially in the age before his personal advent.—This view of the scope of the chapter and in particular, of the phrase, "my servant," seems to meet exegetically all the conditions of the case. Hence there is no occasion to discuss or refute the theory that this "servant" is Isaiah, or the prophets taken collectively.—The verb translated "uphold," involves the sense of grasping and holding firmly. That God imparts his Spirit to the Messiah is a common doctrine of prophecy; (see Isaiah 11 : 2, and 61 : 1); and no less so of gospel history (Matt. 3 : 16. John 1. 32, 33, and 3 : 34).—"Judgment," a prominent word in this passage (vs. 1, 3, 4), has no better equivalent than true religion, in the sense of what is essentially right in heart and life, both toward God and toward man. It is the spirit of loving and serving God according to truth, made practical also in one's whole heart and life toward mankind. To be *righteous* in the broad sense of right purpose and right doing, is the radical idea. Such true religion the Messiah will bring forth, and diffuse widely throughout the Gentile world.

2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

Since the verb "*lift up*" governs "voice," the idiom of our language requires this translation : "He shall not cry aloud, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the streets." This describes the quiet, unostentatious manner of our Lord's personal ministry and life. He never sought but rather shunned notoriety and applause. Again and again, lest his miracles should attract to himself the kind of popularity which he deprecated, and perhaps we might say, lest they should excite too soon the murderous jealousy of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the worldly aspirations of the people, and so embarrass or even frustrate his spiritual work, he "charged the people not to make him known." Matt. 9 : 30, and 12 : 16, and Mark 3 : 12, and 5 : 43, and 7 : 36, and 8 : 30, and 9 : 9. Luke 5 : 14, and 9 : 21, and 8 : 56, etc. This was a very distinctive feature of his earthly life. No pretender to Jewish Messiahship ever bore himself so. No Mohammed, no Mormon head, ever shunned notoriety and applause, or ever set his heart after this manner on the victories of truth and the conquests won by suffering and love.

3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

The figures here, the crushed reed which he shall not utterly break, and the almost burnt-out flax which he shall not extinguish, seem to mean that he shall not use violence, even to this small degree, even where so little would be effective.—The sense of the last clause seems to me best given by this translation : He shall bring forth right views ["judgment"] in respect to truth. It shall be his great work as a teacher to correct prevalent errors and to teach men the vital things of divine truth. This seems to me to give the Hebrew words their exact force better than any other of the numerous constructions that have been proposed. He laid the foundations broad and deep for the universal diffusion of true religion, and did it by bringing out the vital elements of divine truth—those fundamental views of God, of man, of sin, of moral duty and of salvation, which underlie all real religion. One of the great objects of his mission on earth was to develop and diffuse these vital truths. He was a king, but his kingdom was not of this world. All unlike earthly kingdoms, his was an *empire of truth*. In explanation of it Jesus said (John 18 : 37), "Thou sayest" [rightly] "that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that *I should bear witness to the truth*. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." So hearing, it is implied that he becomes one of Christ's people, a subject of his kingdom.—The thought in our verse is this; Earthly king-

doms are built up *by force*, on the basis of violence, and by the use of arms; my kingdom, not so, but by the power of truth.

4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

The two Hebrew verbs, translated "fail" and "be discouraged," are the same which appear in v. 3, in their participles or derived adjectives, qualifying "flax" and "reed," expressing the failing, dying out of the burnt "flax," and the bruising of the "reed." This circumstance determines their meaning here with great precision and certainty. As the Messiah would not use violence upon others, so neither will he falter before the violence inflicted or attempted upon himself. He will not languish nor will his light be put out as one might quench burnt tow; neither will he be crushed or broken as a reed. Though apparently weak and apparently sure to be suppressed by the violence of his enemies, yet such means, however extreme, will fail to arrest his progress, not only during his personal life on earth, but evermore thereafter, until he shall have established pure religion in all the earth. The isles need his law; "law" in the sense of his great system of revealed truth; they perish without it; and can have no real life till they attain this law; and therefore may be said to *wait* for it, though unconscious of the good it will bring them. Their waiting is not that of distinct expectation, nor even of specific desire, but of crushing want which may be thought of as itself waiting for and even imploring this divine supply. They wait for it in the sense that they perish without it, that this only can give them life, and that in God's purpose this shall.—The "isles" here are equivalent to the nations as in chaps. 40: 15, and 41: 1, 5, and must correspond to the Gentiles of v. 1, 6, in this context. Hence the passage must be accepted as a distinct, decisive prophecy that the nations are to be blessed by this life-giving gospel. The great truths respecting God and salvation as taught by the Messiah are yet to go forth to them all, bearing on their bosom deliverance, salvation, eternal life.

5. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

The divine name used here, *El*, meaning a Mighty One, and with the article, *the* mighty God, is specially appropriate in a passage which speaks of God in his relations as the Creator of all and

the God of universal providence. Moreover these verbs which express the divine agency upon matter; "created," "stretched out," "spread forth" etc., are all *in the present tense*. Hence they affirm more than the general fact that God did once create, stretch out, spread forth, and give existence to vegetables and animals. They affirm that he is doing so still and continually. The strongest affirmation of a present activity which is possible in the Hebrew tenses is used throughout the verse, as well of creating and causing the productions of the earth to be as of giving breath and life to its people.—This need not be pressed to mean that God is still creating new worlds although even this may be true; but it manifestly must mean that as Creator, God is still impressing his hand upon his works, perpetuating their motions, keeping their laws in force; or as said (Heb. 1: 3) "upholding all things by his powerful mandate." This agency applies in its full strength to the fourth point made in this series, *i. e.*, bringing out the products, the issues of the earth ["that which cometh out of it."] The Scriptures are innocent of that modern philosophy of God's works which, after he has made the worlds and given them their laws of action, excuses him from all further agencies upon matter or responsible care of it. According to the plain doctrine of the Bible (and of sound reason also) God's hand is no less truly present in all the operations of the material universe than it was in the original act of creation. Precisely this is what our passage affirms.—It may be suggested that the conception of "stretching out the heavens" as a curtain and "spreading out the earth" as a carpet, is poetical, representing the concave sky and the plane surface of the earth as they appear to the eye. The Bible aims in these things to speak only to the apprehensions of the common mind; and not to teach astronomical science. Better than all, it fails not to present forcibly the doctrine that God's hand is actively present in all his works.

6. I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

This mighty God has commissioned the Messiah, the pre-eminent "servant of the Lord," for the work here indicated, and will sustain him and energize his work by an agency no less constant than that which fills the realm of nature.—"Called thee *in righteousness*" means in faithfulness to my word, especially of promise, and perhaps also as due to my intrinsic righteousness in the sense of the benevolence of the divine nature.—"Give thee for a covenant of the people," *i. e.*, to bring them into covenant relationship with God; to make them truly *his* people.—But who are "*the people*?" Are they Jews only, or Gentiles also and especially? The latter surely if we follow the legitimate laws of interpretation. For the same word in the previous verse means all

the people upon the earth to whom God gives breath, and the parallelism in this verse demands that this term should be co-extensive with "the Gentiles;" "a covenant of the people and a light of the Gentiles." "Covenant and light" both mean gospel blessings. "The people" in the one clause and the "nations" (Gentiles) in the other, must be essentially the same.—The same doctrine appears often; *e. g.*, Luke 2: 32; Acts 13: 47; Isaiah 49: 6.

7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

The "opening of blind eyes" is correlated to giving them light, the kind of light in both cases being the same, that of gospel truth to the mind. This verse can not without violence be applied to any thing else than gospel blessings. The gospel goes forth to give sight to the spiritually blind, to release spiritual prisoners, and bring forth to the light of a new day the souls long shut up in confinement and darkness. The attempt to apply this to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon is puerile; unworthy of learned critics.

8. *I am* the LORD; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

This verse, if carefully studied in its relations to the context, including the two previous chapters and this, will be found wonderfully rich in significance. The context contemplates the great moral conflict between the powers of good and evil in our world—God and his servants of the first party; his enemies, especially as represented by their idol gods, of the second party. The vital question is, Who shall have the glory of victory in this conflict? Shall Sin triumph in the end; or shall the Almighty God? Here we have the answer.—"I am the Jehovah," the immutable, the ever faithful One; the God whose promises never fail. "That is my name;" it has a well-known significance. I stand by it, and will surely make it good. I acknowledge the name; I glory in it; I shall never shrink from the obligations it implies; shall never falter in the work which it involves. As to yielding the palm of victory to my foes in this great battle, I never can. "My glory I will not give to another;" the honors of victory can never go to graven images. The idols must utterly perish, and the glorious name of the one true God must be honored, loved, and adored, from the rising to the setting sun!—So let it be! and all the glory be to God alone for ever more!

9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

These "former things" are foregoing prophecies, delivered previously and already fulfilled. Assuming as we must that this portion of Isaiah was written late in his life, in quite the latter part of Hezekiah's reign, or possibly even in the first years of Manasseh, this language might well apply to some of his own early prophecies; *e. g.*, against Samaria, chaps. 7: 8, and 9: 11, 12, and 17: 3-11, and 28: 1-4; also against the Assyrian army, chaps. 10: 24-34, and 14: 24-27, and 17: 12-14, and 33. Or it may have included prophecies sent of God by other prophets. But it naturally refers to prophecies spoken by Isaiah himself. Now he is announcing new ones, before the events *germinate*; *i. e.*, before they indicate by even the swelling of the bud, that the flower is duly to appear. This figure implies that he predicts events which have as yet foreshadowed no indications that human sagacity can discern—a declaration squarely opposed to the theories of those critics who maintain that these prophecies were written by some second Isaiah who lived near the restoration, after the events which he predicted had fairly germinated so that his sagacious eye could see the foretokens of their coming. One might almost suppose that (the divine Spirit foreshowing it) the true Isaiah foresaw the scepticism of these critics of our day and dropped this word as his rebuke and denial of their slander upon his prophetic unction!

10. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

13. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

A "new song" celebrates new mercies.—The dwellers in remote regions are interested in these far-reaching blessings and are therefore called on to join in the joyous thanksgiving. "They that go down to the sea," are rather they that go out upon the sea for purposes of traffic. "All that is therein," includes the population in the islands and maritime regions, all lands reached by crossing the sea. "The wilderness" looks naturally to Arabia, encircling Palestine on the South and East; a vast country, yet not to be thought of as utterly waste and void of population. The Hebrew word which is here and usually rendered "wilderness," means by

its etymology, *pasture-land*. *i. e.*, lands not cultivated, but left for grass and shrubs to grow spontaneously wherever there is sufficient moisture. Over these vast and half-desolate pasture-lands, the nomadic Arab tribes wander, moving from point to point as the supplies of water and of vegetable growths may require. Cities were scattered at various points over this Arab desert.—Kedar, one of the sons of Ishmael (Gen. 25: 13) here represents the whole Arab people. The word here for "villages" might apply to their temporary encampments with their tents. The "rock" whose dwellers are called on to sing may possibly be Petra, sometimes called by its Hebrew name, "Sela" (the very word here used), this city being the capital of ancient Edom: but more probably it means the people of Arabia Petrea, the "stony." In this view the whole verse describes the population of the various portions of Arabia.—The thought in v. 12 is this: Let the *people in the islands* give glory to the Lord and declare his praise. In v. 13, "stir up jealousy," refers to his own. Jealous for his own honor, he will arouse himself in earnest to vindicate his cause, to cast down opposing powers, and to build up his own kingdom. The word for "prevail" means strictly, *will show himself mighty against his foes*.—Now as to the general scope and significance of these verses (10–13), it is manifest from their connection and from their own words, (1.) That these are the "new things" which the prophet is now announcing. (2.) That they fall under the general purpose of God to wrest the laurels of victory and honor from the idol-gods of this world and from their worshippers, and wear them himself. This is the spirit of v. 8 and essentially the strain of thought throughout chapter 41. (3.) This great achievement will be in the highest degree joyous and blessed to all people in every quarter of the world, a fit theme of praise and thanksgiving for them all. Precisely this is the prominent thought which underlies this passage. (4.) Hence the thing really predicted here is, the triumph of truth, the diffusion of the gospel, and the substantial victory of King Messiah over sin and Satan throughout all the earth. This passage should of course be taken in connection with vs. 1–4, 6, 7 above, which declare with less of poetry yet perhaps with more precision in the form of statement, that the Messiah shall push onward the victories of truth and righteousness until true religion shall pervade the earth and bless all the nations.—That the great Arabian country, for twelve hundred years the central home of the Mohammedan delusion, is made so prominent here should at least give us faith in God's purpose to fill all the earth with the knowledge and the glory of his name. Surely the localities specified in these prophecies cannot be excepted and left out in the glad day of fulfillment. Nor let it be supposed that they exhaust the promise. They are rather the illustrative case, to show what shall be throughout all the nations.

14. I have long time holden my peace; I have been



still, *and* refrained myself: *now* will I cry like a tra-  
vailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.

Following the tenses of the original we must read, "I have long time held my peace: I *will* be still; I will refrain myself." The full sense is expressed (probably) by introducing the word "saying" before the futures; *saying* [to myself] "I *will* be still," etc. That is, the Lord had felt himself pressed long before to this arousing of his power against the powers of wickedness in this world, but yet said; "Still let me forbear awhile longer." The Lord represents it as a great trial to his sensibilities to see Sin making such ravages upon human well-being; yet the best results on the whole may make it wise to give scope for the more full development of human and Satanic depravity, in order to evolve in the end a mightier moral power against all sin. This view of the case seems to account adequately for the struggle in the divine mind here represented.—By general consent of the best modern critics, the last two verbs mean, not "destroy" and "devour," but, I would *pant* and *gasp*; *i. e.*, as one greatly excited and aroused to the utmost exertion.

15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

These figures signify extreme changes, yet are in somewhat frequent use by Isaiah. See chap. 35: 6, 7. These changes must be destructive; changes in the line of casting down and destroying; and therefore must be applied to the work and the defenses of sin; primarily perhaps to the idols, the temples, the groves, the idol priesthood, the idolatrous institutions, and all the corresponding social embodiments of sin among men. All these God will subvert and utterly abolish. The great new birth of the race from sin to God must involve a vast amount of destruction. See Acts 19: 18–20. The old things that are to pass away have long intrenched themselves in social institutions, in works of art, in pernicious literature—means and appliances for setting the basest passions of the human soul on fire; distilleries, brothels, theaters, romances and novels—how many things of this sort must go down wherever the pure gospel shall rise in the ascendant and God shall go forth in his spiritual power to wash the world from its pollutions and reconsecrate it to purity and peace!

16. And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.



The figures here follow the lead of those in vs. 6, 7—the Messiah “a light to the Gentiles,” opening blind eyes. Truth is to the mind what light is to the body. The Gentiles, long blind to the true God and to the way of salvation, are to be led in ways never known to them before; the way of holiness and heaven.

17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, *Ye are our gods*.

This “turning back” is not a spiritual turning from being enemies to being friends of God; but the physical turning back of enemies in confusion and shame. The verse contemplates the great moral conflict between the two parties; God and his servants on the one hand, against idol gods with all their followers on the other—the same which appears throughout chap. 41. Here God’s party are victorious. Those who trust in idols are utterly confounded.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

The “blind” here I take to be the “blind” heathen of v. 16, and of course “deaf” is only another word for the same idea. —Some interpreters suppose these words addressed to the wayward people of God, but not in harmony with the previous context. The present thought is of those who are now put to confusion by the failure of their idol gods to help them. These the Lord invites to open their ears to hear his voice and their eyes to see the light of his truth. It is mercy’s call to the heathen world to come to the light of God ere they perish in their sins.

19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger *that* I sent? who is blind as *he that* is perfect, and blind as the LORD’s servant?

Here the address turns suddenly from the blind heathen to the more sinfully blinded among God’s professed people. As if the thought in the mind of the Lord were, Why should I be exhorting the blinded heathen when my own people, my nominal servants, are (some of them at least) more blinded than they and far more guilty for their blindness because they have seen more truth [“seeing many things”] and yet have “not observed?” to any purpose?—The reader will recur to the notes on v. 1, bearing on the use of the phrase, “my servant.” In this passage the phrase can by no means apply to the Messiah. It can apply only to his professed but apostate people, with special ref-

erence probably to the ages shortly preceding the coming of the Messiah. The Jews were God's "messengers" of truth to the world.—The word for "perfect" means by its etymology one brought into a state either of peace or of completeness. Hence it has been rendered variously; "my friend" (Gesenius); "one perfectly instructed" (Lowth); or "the *devoted* one;" the last being favored by the analogy of the Arabic, in which language Mohammedans apply this word to themselves as pre-eminently the servants of God. In its general sense it is doubtless parallel with the other terms; "my servant;" "my messenger."

20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.

The thought here is that the Lord's people had utterly failed to improve their opportunities for divine knowledge. They had seen many things of God, but would not observe, *i. e.*, would not keep them in view; would not hold them before the mind for close and impressive attention. In the same sense I prefer to take the parallel clause; "opening the ears" being equivalent to "having ears" as in Jer. 5: 21; "Who have eyes and see not, and *have ears* but hear not." Also Ezek. 12: 2. Hence the idea is not that they voluntarily opened their ears as if in earnest to hear, but that God gave them open ears, naturally *made open*, and yet their own voluntary agency had closed them and they would not hear.—Dr. Alexander proposes to insert the word *sent*—sent to open ears [*i. e.*, those of other people], yet he will not hear himself. The objection to this is one that Dr. A. often urges with great force against other critics, *viz.*, that the word "sent" is not in the text, so that his criticism rather amends the text than interprets it.—Another objection (grammatical) is that the word for "opening" is not in the infinitive construct, as it would be if the construction were, "*sent to open*."

21. The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

The course of thought in the context forbids us to apply this verse to the Messiah and to his atoning work. The drift of remark here has reference to God's people and especially his ancient people, the Jews, considered as his "servants" [professionally], yet grievously hardened. This verse declares, not that God is "well pleased" with their course or with their character as here contemplated; but that he is *propitious, favorably inclined*, for the sake of his own righteous cause, *i. e.*, that he will not abandon them to moral ruin and his kingdom with them, but will persist in remedial efforts; will reclaim his people and will magnify and bring forth in honor the truth and the moral power

of his kingdom.—The word “law” should obviously be taken in the same sense here as in the only case of its use in the context, viz., v. 4, “The isles shall wait for his law,” *i. e.*, for the true religion, or more precisely, for the knowledge of what God requires of men for their restoration to holiness and salvation. The idea at bottom is, God will not be frustrated in his great thoughts of mercy toward our world by the blindness and apostasy of his ancient people. He will chasten and reclaim them; will deal with them mercifully for his own goodness’ sake, because he is determined to save a great multitude. He will not leave his *law*, *i. e.*, the truths essential to real piety, to be dishonored by his wayward people, but will magnify it and make it yet more glorious before all the earth.

22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; *they are* all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

These are the chastisements to which God subjected his wayward people for their correction. “This people” are the same previously called “my servant” (v. 19). There may be a tacit allusion here to their captivity in Babylon, yet not exclusively. Other chastisements should be included also, not excepting the Syrian wars of the times of the Maccabees.

23. Who among you will give ear to this? *who* will hearken and hear for the time to come?

24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

Who of all my people will attentively consider the significance of these chastisements? Who will lay them to heart, recognize God’s hand in them and discern his purpose? Will ye not see that it was God who gave Jacob for a spoil to his enemies, and that he did so because of Jacob’s sins?

## CHAPTER XLIII.

THIS chapter bears general relations to its larger context, chaps. 40-45; but more special relations to its nearer context, viz., chap. 42: 19-25. In this latter passage, Israel stands as the servant of God, chosen, yet often unfaithful to her trust; instructed, but yet dark-minded and at best improving very imperfectly her opportunities for divine knowledge. Hence she was chastened, but never utterly abandoned.—This general course of thought is continued in this chapter. God has chosen Israel and will befriend her (v. 1); will be with her through flood and fire (v. 2); has loved her before all other nations and hence has subjected them to evils for her greater good (vs. 3, 4); will enlarge her by bringing home from the ends of the earth to her abode all that properly belong to her as God's family (vs. 5-7). The nations are challenged to produce any proofs of real prophecy and hence of true divinity in their gods (v. 9); but God appeals to his people as his witnesses to his claims both in the line of prophecy and of miracles of power (vs. 10-13); adduces the special case of saving his people from Babylon (vs. 14, 15) and from Egypt (vs. 15, 16). He has yet greater things to reveal and to perform (vs. 18-21);—yet his people have not served him heartily but often heartlessly, wearying him with their sins; but God has forgiven them, not on the ground of merit in them, but of his sovereign love and his purposes of salvation for the race (vs. 22-28).

1. But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.

The introductory words, "But now," propose to enter more fully into the relations between God and his chosen yet inconstant and very imperfect people. God would not have Israel fear the final issue of those afflictions which will befall her. He created and formed her, which means that he has chosen the posterity of Abraham and has made the nation of Israel all that she is in the line of moral worth and of peculiar honor as his chosen people. Therefore she ought to trust her Lord to de-

termine all her future.—The expressions, “redeemed” and “called by thy name,” still heighten the intimate relations between God and his people. “Redeemed,” refers to the consecration of the first born to God and the special redemption required by the Mosaic law in their case. See Ex. 13 : 13, and Num. 3 : 11-13. The Levites were taken for holy services in place of all the first born of Israel for this assigned reason ; “Because all the first born are mine ; for on the day that I smote all the first born of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first born in Israel ; mine they shall be ; I am the Lord.” Hence the consecrated Levites were in this sense the redeemed ones—the price of redemption for all the people.—“Called by thy name,” includes the ideas of a designation ; made public ; to a specially sacred service for God. Having thus called and consecrated her, the Lord could pertinently say to her, “Thou art mine.”

2. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

The Psalmist has these figures for extreme trials; “We went through fire and through water” (Ps. 66: 12). The passing through waters and rivers may refer historically to the Red Sea and the Jordan.—The last clause is better read *burn* than “kindle upon,” as being the sense of the original and stronger. The case of the three children in the furnace (Dan. 3: 13-27) is in point. A blessed truth underlies these pertinent figures; viz., that no peril or pain can be so extreme that God’s presence shall not be with his trustful people there, and make the martyr’s stake a paradise.—The antecedent context favors the supposition that the afflictions contemplated here are chastisements from God to humble and reclaim his wandering people. In this view the verse is a promise that however apparently perilous, they shall be really harmless, and even fruitful of blessings.

3. For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Savior: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

The rendering is better without the supplied word “am,” thus; “For I, Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior, have given Egypt for thy ransom,” etc. The descriptive names of God heighten the precious significance of the statement. It was in his relations to them as their own God, their own ever faithful Jehovah, the Holy One known as the God of Israel and as their own Savior, that he put them before Egypt, in a sort

sacrificing Egypt for their good. The army—the pride and the prowess of Egypt—went down before the eyes of the escaping hosts of Israel—equivalent to buying the salvation of Israel at the cost of Egypt, or as the phrase here is, “giving Egypt for thy ransom.” Ethiopia and Seba are grouped with Egypt, perhaps as her allies; at least in the same general sense. Both genealogically and geographically, they were near. Cush and Egypt [Mizraim] were brothers; Seba was a son of Cush [Gen. 10: 5, 6]. Geographically, the earliest location of Cush is supposed to have been in Arabia: in later times it was certainly in Ethiopia. On the authority of Josephus, Seba is held to be the country known as Meroe, a district of Ethiopia, cut by the head waters of the Nile. But the general idea here is, *Israel esteemed of God before all other nations*; so that what is said of these three might have been said of any others, saving that the Exodus gave a special illustration in the case of Egypt.

4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

The word translated “since” might mean either, *from the time* when thou wast beloved and chosen, or, *because of the fact* that thou wast, etc. The former has the preference as the primary sense, as in harmony with the facts of the case, and really including the latter. From the time when God set his heart on Israel, he had held her in honor and love, and therefore declares, “I will [on every occasion] give men and nations for thy life.” This is to be taken in the same sense as “giving Egypt for thy ransom.”

5. Fear not; for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west:

6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

7. *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Rejecting the construction which applies this passage to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon as too narrow and indeed, in many points quite inapplicable, we must find in it the calling of the Gentiles and the “gathering together in one” of all who are really God’s people. For it should be noticed that the Lord says, “I will *bring*” (not *bring back* to their former home), and from every quarter of the heavens; not from Babylon only; and

moreover, all that are called by his name and whom he has now created and made holy for his own glory, and not the lineal Jew alone.—V. 7, adapted to the idiom, would read, “Every one called by name, whom I have created, formed, yea made for my glory.” The repetition of the same thought—“created,” “formed” “made”—lays special stress on the agency of God through his word and spirit in the regeneration of sinful men, Jews or Gentiles, to render them fit members of his church and fit servants of his earthly kingdom.—This great and precious promise is pertinently adduced as a reason why his people need not *fear*. “For I am with thee, saith the Lord,” to ensure to thee success in what thou shouldest regard as thy life-work—the conversion of men from darkness to light, from serving Satan to being the joyful servants of the blessed God.

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth*.

The grand conception in these verses (as in chap. 41: 1, 5, 21) is that of a convocation of the heathen world before an ideal tribunal to test the rival claims of Jehovah, *versus* idol gods—the decision to turn mainly on the point of *prescience*, as evinced in prophecy. Who has predicted events far in the future, and they have come to pass? Have any of the heathen gods done this? If any, who is he, and what has he predicted? Let them come forward, produce their witnesses, and prove their claim valid, [“justify themselves;”] or let them hear my witnesses, and say it is truth.—The connection of this with the context is not unnatural. The Lord has declared that he will call forth from the ends of the earth a great multitude, even Gentile converts from every land. Now in view of this glorious prediction and of its moral force as a prediction when it shall be accomplished, the Lord challenges the heathen world to come and see it. They have eyes and might see if they would. Let them come and look these stupendous facts in the face. Have their gods ever uttered such prophecies—so minute, so vast also, and so far reaching, involving the most stupendous changes the world ever saw? Let them show any thing like this if they can; and if they can not, let them admit that this is the truth and that Jehovah is God alone.—The verbs which the English version puts in the imperative; “Bring forth” (v. 8) and “Let the nations be gathered” (v. 9) are in the preter tense. “They *have* brought forth;” “The

nations *have been* gathered." Perhaps this may be regarded as the "prophetic preter"—the prophet thrown in prophetic vision beyond the event so that he sees it as passing or fully past, and hence speaks of it accordingly.

10. Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servants whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

With the same grand convocation in mind, the Lord states who his witnesses are to be. They are "ye," his professed people, in the broad sense which appears in v. 5-7—those vast multitudes gathered from every land into the one society of the redeemed; all these and with them "my servant," the Messiah, who comes to earth to bear witness to the truth, *i. e.*, to reveal God to men. The object sought in all this witnessing is that ye may know and believe me and understand that I *am* he, the one ever living God. Similar is the testimony from the Savior's own lips. "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God." "I have declared unto them thy name and I will declare it" (John 17: 2, 26).—The last clause conceives of idol gods as *made*, manufactured; and therefore says forcibly, None of all their idol gods was made, formed, before I existed: none will be made after I shall have ceased to exist, this supposition being simply absurd and the thing impossible. None of them can claim the divine prerogative of being before all things else, nor, indeed, of out-living all other beings.

11. I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beside me *there is* no savior.

The repetition of "I" is emphatic; I, and none but myself, am the one only Jehovah, the changeless, the ever truthful and faithful one. There is no Savior besides me. None else has power to save. But this implies in the strongest manner that God *has* such power, and is a perfect Savior for all who accept him as such.

12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when *there was* no strange god among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God.

Of the three points affirmed—"declared," "saved," "showed"—the first and the last refer to prophetic predictions, involving prescience, and also the great depths of divine love in predicting



such things. The other point is that of power to save, actually exerted often in the history of his people.—All this God had done in the absence of strange [idol] gods, so that they can claim no agency in these things. Or perhaps there may be an intimation that God wrought thus wonderfully for his people only when they had no idol gods among them.—In view of what God had shown and had done among them and for them, they were competent witnesses to his true divinity. They had seen abundant evidence that Jehovah is indeed the true God.

13. Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

Some have referred "*the day*" ['before *the day was*'] to the birth of the Hebrew nation; some to the Exodus from Egypt. It is better to say, from before "the evening and the morning were the first day," I have been he—the one all-controlling God. —"Who shall *let*," in the sense of *hinder*, not of *permit*. But the original means, who shall turn it back; who shall counteract and reverse what I perform?

14. Thus saith the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans whose cry is in the ships.

15. I *am* the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your king.

These two verses appeal to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon as the two next in order (vs. 16, 17) appeal to the Exodus from Egypt, in proof that Jehovah is truly the mighty God of his people Israel, their Creator, Redeemer and King. The deliverance from Babylon was indeed in the distant future relatively to the actual life of Isaiah, while that from Egypt was past, yet the former is presented here as seen by the prophet already past or passing. "I *have sent*," and "*have brought down*" etc. This mode of writing is due to the nature of prophetic vision. Scenes were presented to the eye as if present or past, somewhat like the phenomena of dreams.—"For your sakes," to deliver you, my people, from your captivity there, have I sent my servants, Cyrus and his Medes and Persians, to Babylon, and have brought down (in the sense of breaking their power) all their *fugitives*, for so the Hebrew word is best translated; and the Chaldeans whose shouts are heard in their ships. The word "*fugitives*" probably alludes to the prophecy (Isaiah 13: 14) which assumes the presence in Babylon of a vast foreign population who when

they saw the city smitten, scattered and fled every one to his own land. See notes on the passage. It is natural that a subsequent prophecy of Isaiah should refer thus to an earlier one. Hence this construction has the preference over many others that seem for the most part arbitrary.—That the Chaldeans were in their early days a maritime people is scarcely doubtful. An immense canal connected the Euphrates at Babylon with the Tigris, making Babylon the great commercial mart for the countries lying on both the Euphrates and the Tigris, and also those reached through the Persian gulf into which the Euphrates emptied. "Semiramis, the founder of Babylon, is said to have had a fleet of three thousand galleys."—The name Chaldeans, used here, designates the people who were there when Isaiah wrote and in yet earlier times. Dr. Alexander remarks, "It is an interesting fact that recent etymological research has identified the Chaldeans of the Hebrew ethnography with the Chaldoi of the Greeks, and with the Kurds of modern Asia."

16. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

Without doubt this refers to the Exodus from Egypt. The present tense, "Thus saith the Lord who *is making*," or the one making, seems to imply that he not only *has done* this once, but can again; often does such things for his people, and may be relied on to do them any time when there shall be occasion.—The special points seized upon here are his making so perfect a pathway for the escape of his hedged up and imperilled people; his gathering together the flower of Egypt's military force, especially the horses and chariots in which they gloried most; and then laying them low in their watery grave from which they should rise no more—extinguishing their brilliant glory as the flames of burnt tow when plunged in the sea. The whole description is graphic and terse, full of fire and withal of most impressive truth for the comfort of God's people in every age.

18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

But think not longer of former things, for there are things yet to come vastly greater, eclipsing the old and throwing them entirely into the shade.

19. Behold I will do a new thing, now it shall spring

forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.

20. The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness *and* rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people my chosen.

21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

Manifestly we must look here for a greater blessing than any yet given, or even than the literal restoration from Babylon. This latter having been brought before the mind in vs. 14, 15 must be counted in v. 18 as among the "former things" and not among the "new things" of v. 19.—The language and figures are possibly borrowed from the restoration from Babylon, or more probably brought before the mind in v. 14, from the journeyings through the desert of Sinai; or perhaps from both. Historically they are more easily verified in the gushing waters from the smitten rock and in the streams that ran in the desert of Sinai than in any thing known of their return from Babylon. See 1 Cor. 10: 4; Ex. 17: 7; Num. 20: 11; Ps. 78: 15, 16, and 105: 41.—But manifestly, these are figures, and refer to spiritual blessings to be shed forth in the gathering of the Gentiles home to God. V. 21 contains obvious allusions to v. 7. "This people that I have formed for myself" are the same whom he has "created, formed and made for his glory." And yet further, the passage chap. 44: 3–5, doubtless refers to this and heightens the proof that this describes spiritual blessings upon the whole church including the Gentiles. When these great blessings shall come upon God's people, they will indeed show forth his praise, both actively, out of their full hearts, and passively as illustrating in their own wonderful conversion, the large and victorious grace of God.—"Now shall it spring forth," means that the prophetic germs of it were then appearing: perhaps also that the nearer blessing of restoration from Babylon is a sort of foregoing type and pledge of it.—The beasts of the field giving honor to God for this marvellous supply of water in the desert reminds us of the words, "If these should hold their peace, I say unto you that the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19: 40).

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy

sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering nor wearied thee with incense.

24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

From such glorious views of the distant future, the prophet falls back upon the present state of the chosen people, to rebuke their insincerity, fickleness and neglect of even the external rites of the Mosaic law. God had not been unreasonably exacting of them, had not wearied them with excessive demands; but they had wearied him with their iniquities and put him to hard service by their sins.—These verses have an important bearing upon the question of the actual present of the writer. Did he live in the age of the ancient and veritable Isaiah, writing in the very last years of Hezekiah, or the first of Manasseh? Or did this writer live, as many German critics claim, near the close of the exile?—It may well be assumed that the writer here speaks of his actual present, and not of a prophetic future, nor of a historic past.—Now this strain of complaint and rebuke would have been entirely out of place during the exile, for the good reason that sacrifices were then out of the question. The people might have responded; You know very well that we are not allowed to bring our small cattle for burnt offerings nor our sacrifices of any sort *here*. The God of our nation has always forbidden sacrifices elsewhere than in the one place where he has recorded his name.—This passage therefore can not apply to the state of the people in the exile, and therefore the writer was not living in his actual present there.

25. *I, even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Yet with marvelous mercy God blots out even such flagrant, provoking sins. The emphasis of this statement is peculiar and touching; "*I, even I, am* he that forgiveth." No other being ever forgives like your own God. It comes of his overflowing mercy, and not from any merit of yours. Not for your sakes, but for his own, because he has thoughts of mercy for our ruined world and finds his blessedness in the outgoings of his love.

26. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

The Lord speaks to his people, "Remind me," if this charge

of sin be not true; let us implead each other; set forth thy innocence if thou canst; defend thyself against this charge and prove it false, that thou mayest be justified.

27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

“Thy first father” is best referred to Adam. There is at least no special pertinence in referring it to Abraham, whose record in the Scriptures presents nothing to justify such reference. But the Scriptures do make a special point of the sins of the “first father” of our race.—“Thy teachers;” literally, thy interpreters whose mission it has been to reveal and explain God’s word and will, have greatly transgressed. False prophets and apostate priests had exerted a terribly pernicious influence.

28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

The verbs rendered “have profaned” and “have given” should be in the future tense. “Therefore I *will* profane,” etc. This Hebrew word means etymologically to pierce, to mutilate, to treat as worthless and not as sacred. Speaking of those who were by their office, sacred, holy men, God says, I will strip them of every thing sacred and treat them as having no sanctity, but as being worthless.—I *will* give Jacob to anathemas, to be made a fearful curse, with reference to the blighting judgments that must come on a recreantly apostate people for their rebellion against God. “They are not all Israel who are of Israel.” The corrupt ones of the nominal Israel are threatened here with terrible inflictions of calamity. God’s purposes of mercy to the world make it necessary to purify his professed servants with searching discipline.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

THE general subject continues—a strain of gospel promises to God’s true people for their encouragement and consolation, based on his own eternal attributes, even those of the infinite and only true God; still giving large prominence to his pre-science as evinced in the gift of prophecy to his servants (vs.

1-8). The declaration, "*no other God but me*," leads to an extended discussion of the origin of idols to show the folly and stupidity of their makers and worshipers (vs. 9-20), after which the Lord resumes his address to his people; refers to his forgiving mercy (v. 22); exhorts to joyful thanksgiving and praise (v. 23); and sets forth the marvelous things which he has done, including among them his use of Cyrus to destroy Babylon, deliver his people, and rebuild the holy city and temple (vs. 26-28).

1. Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen.

The usual epithets applied to Jacob and Israel, "my servant," and "whom I have chosen," suffice to show clearly that the prophet thinks not of the nominal Israel that is according to the flesh, but of the true Israel of God, his real church. This accounts for the terms "Israel" and "Jacob," rather than Judah, the latter at this time being the only external representative of God's kingdom, and therefore the proper term if the Lord were speaking of the external Israel only. The phrases, "his servant" and "his chosen," included all the truly religious people in Judah, the "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal." All the promises and every encouraging word sent from God to them in the age of Isaiah are good for their successors through all time, being manifestly designed to strengthen their faith and hope in every age until all these great predictions of future blessings shall have been fulfilled.

2. Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

The precise construction may be well expressed; "Thus saith Jehovah; the same who made thee and formed thee from the womb will help thee." The fact of his having given spiritual existence to Israel, a new-born, regenerated people, and of his having sustained them ever since their birth, guarantees all future blessings which they may need. So, let them never fear. See the argument of Paul, Rom. 8 : 28-39, and his confidence as expressed in Phil. 1 : 6.—"Jeshurun," another name for Jacob, occurs elsewhere only in Deut. 32 : 15, and 33 : 5, 26. Etymologically it means the *upright one*; but whether it be a diminutive expressing the additional idea of endearment (my dear little one), is yet in dispute among learned critics.

3. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,

and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.

The pouring forth of water, in showers or otherwise, is a frequent and pertinent figure for the bestowment of copious blessings. Thus Mal. 3:10; "I will pour you out a blessing till there is not enough;" and Ezek. 34:26; "I will make the places round about my hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings." It is an interesting fact that the Lord uses precisely this figure in prophecy to represent the copious effusions of his Spirit in the gospel age and especially in its latter days.—That this passage refers to the Spirit is shown by the parallelism; "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed; my blessing upon thine offspring." The same phraseology appears in chap. 32:15; "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." See also Joel 2:28; and in the New Testament such passages as John 7:37-39. Acts 2:17, 33. The words of Christ (as in John 7, etc.) seem to refer to this passage. The prophet says, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty;" corresponding to which, Jesus cries, "If any man *thirst*, let him come unto me and drink." "And this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." Let it be further observed that Isaiah manifestly has the same great blessings in mind in the passage (43:18-21); "I will give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen." So also the passage (41:17, 18); "When their tongue faileth for thirst, I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys," etc. The striking similarity in the strain of all these passages seems to be decisive in proof of their common reference to the great gospel blessings of the Christian age—the mission and gift of the Spirit.—"Thy seed" and "thine offspring," seem to have primary reference to the future generations of God's people in the gospel age, the successors of the truly pious in Isaiah's time; yet the form of statement, so analogous to that of the primal blessing to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to *thy seed* after thee," is well adapted to inspire faith and prayer in the case of parents for blessings upon their immediate offspring. There is surely nothing in the spirit of the promise to restrict it to remote posterity, to the exclusion of the next generation, our own precious children for whom God himself gives us warm hearts to pray.

4. And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.

This is a picture of fertility, verdure and beauty, to represent the fruits of holiness under the effusions of the Spirit of God.

These fruits shall spring up and grow as grass and willows in tropical countries where moisture abounds by the river's side.

5. One shall say, I *am* the LORD's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the LORD, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel.

The general sense is clear. Conversions are numerous, and from many various quarters, one here, another there; one expressing his new purpose in this form, and another in that. This one will say, I am for the Lord [Hebrew]; that one will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand, (or *upon* his hand), "For the Lord," [*i. e.*, am I]; and another will assume the name of Israel with welcome and endearment. —The verb here translated "surname," occurs elsewhere only in chap. 45 : 4 and seems to imply giving or accepting a new name to indicate special relationship and affection. —In the clause where "*with*" stands in italics, the sense may be, "write *upon* the hand," *i. e.*, indelibly, to stand inscribed as a memorial in the very flesh.

6. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there* is no God.

These attributes of divinity are assumed by Christ (Rev. 1 : 8, 17, and 2 : 8, and 22 : 13). —In the last clause, the precise shade of thought is expressed by *without* rather than "besides." The meaning is not merely, no God other than me, but none who is independent of me; none who could be anything at all *without me*. If there are evil spirits of very considerable power, they are by no means independent of the infinite God. —The word rendered "besides" occurs in chap. 36 : 10 : "Am I come up *without* the Lord against this land to destroy it?" Also Jer. 44 : 19, where the idolatrous women ask; "Did we worship the Queen of heaven *without* our husbands?"

7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

The thought is, Who of all the heathen gods can foretell the future as I have and call events into existence and arrange them in their order ever since man was placed on the earth; or, as the sense may be, ever since I planted my church, the ancient people? All the clauses of the verse, even including the last, seem to come into one continuous series of questions, so that the last



clause would be thus; "Who are they that can show forth to their people events soon to happen, and also events yet more remote?"

8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

Fear no competition, yea, rather fear *nothing*, since your God has such prescience, and also such power.—"Told thee *from that time*," means, "since I appointed the ancient people," as in the verse previous.—Ye are my witnesses to prove my claim in respect to real prophecy, and hence my claim to be the true God.—"Yea, there is no *God*," but in the original and also in the English margin, no *rock*, no sure foundation of hope and trust for his people.—"I know not *any*," and of course there is none, since none could possibly exist without his knowing it.

9. They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

The makers of graven images should be honest enough to witness against idols as worthless things; but alas, they have not the good sense to be ashamed of their folly. Or possibly the last clause may mean, They are morally blinded ("see not, nor know")—do not know enough to be ashamed—the result of which must be their utter confusion and shame.

10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?

The emphatic word is "*Who*." Who has done the labor of forming such gods? How came they into existence? A specially sarcastic force is given to this question in the original by the use of the name "El" for God. Who made this *mighty* God?

11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together.

In the phrase, "his fellows," *his* refers to the idol. "*His* fellows" or associates are the idolaters, including perhaps the idol-makers, but not excluding his worshipers. The workmen that make the idol's images are only mortal men. Let them all

convene and stand up to show their utmost strength and numbers. The result can be only their utmost panic and confusion.

12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

Waiving minute criticism upon these words, such as might be useful to the Hebrew reader but not to the English, the general meaning is clear. You are introduced into the blacksmith's shop; you see the worker in iron getting a red heat upon it in his coals, giving shape to it with his hammer, working it with his strong right arm; but these makers of gods have their human weaknesses. This smith becomes hungry and his strength fails him; having no water to drink, he becomes faint. The poor man has worked hard to make a god; but the god ministers nothing to his help and strength in his time of need! Would not he, if he were a sensible, decent idol, and had any power to befriend his worshipers?

13. The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

Next we have the carpenter's shop where the wood-work is done. He uses his rule and line. His "planes" are rather *chisels*, since his work consists mainly in carving. He gives it the human form, and finally makes a very pretty ornament for the parlor. You see the process step by step, and are shown some of the tools which he uses to make a wooden god.

14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.

Note the underlying questions upon which the prophet would throw light, viz., Is there any *god* at all in this image of metal or wood? If so, *how* did he get in, and when? Observe all the processes in the smith's shop; did you see the god *there*? Go into the carpenter's shop; mark carefully all he does in his department. Was the real god made *there*?—And now lest some may still imagine that there was some antecedent sacredness in the wood before it came into the shop, the prophet takes you a step farther back. This idolater means to have first-rate timber; so he goes into the forest and selects some of the best varieties—cedar

or cypress, oak or pine ["ash"]; he transplants it; cultivates it well: the rains water it as they do other trees. That is, it is a mere tree, growing under the common laws of vegetation. Is the idol-god made and brought into existence so?

15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.

Now the tree is ready to be cut down. Observe what this idol-maker and worshipper does with it. If the wood of that tree *was* (in his opinion) a god or had a god in it, he would deem it almost sacred; but see! he takes part of it for a fire to warm himself; he uses other parts of it to bake his bread and roast his flesh-meat, and this he eats till he is satisfied without once thinking there was any idol-god in that wood or in the fire which he made with it; and then he makes himself a god out of another portion of the same tree, and to this god he bows down and offers prayer, and cries, "Deliver me, for thou art my god!" With the keenest satire the prophet represents the man as feeling very happy over his warm fire, enjoying it as any man with cold fingers might well do, without the least suspicion that he has been burning up a part of his idol-god! So that these idol-makers have no thought of an idol-god in that forest wood! How then did he get into the wooden image?—Alexander remarks that, "all the interpreters since Calvin quote the striking parallel from the Satires of Horace, [1: 8], "*Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum; Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, Maluit esse Deum.*"—The meaning of which is, Formerly I was the trunk of a fig-tree—useless wood! when the workman, long in doubt whether to make me into a stool or a Priapus [heathen god], at length chose to make me a god. The quotation is in point to show that some of the ancient heathen had sense enough to see what Isaiah has set forth so vividly here—the utter folly of supposing a god to live in a stick of wood, or a stick to be itself a god.

18. They have not known nor understood: for he

hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.

19. And none considereth in his heart, neither is *there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul. nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

These are the prophet's reflections and inferences. They have no heart to know the truth. They love to relieve themselves of the thought of an infinite God, holy, and ever present; and therefore God gives them up to this wretched delusion. They are judicially blinded. Paul accounts for the rise of idolatry in this way; see Rom. 1: 19-26, 28.—To put in the strongest light the inexcusable folly of image-makers and idol-worshippers, Isaiah (v. 19) says, "No one of them has sense enough to reflect on what he has himself done as above described and say, A part of it I have burned in the fire and I have even baked bread on the coals of it; I will roast flesh and will eat: and the rest of it I will make into an abomination and will cast myself down to a log of wood." The words of Isaiah give no indication of a question in this latter clause, "Shall I make," etc. The prophet's thought is that the man has not the sense to look over the process he has himself gone through and think a moment of its significance. He *lives* out the absurdity, but will not let it come into his mind—will not give it a moment's thought.—"He feedeth on ashes," bitter and caustic, with sorrow in the end. The phrase is analogous to that of Hosea (12: 2) "He feedeth on wind."—The phrase, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside," *i. e.*, from truth and reason, assumes that the intellect is blinded by a wicked heart, perverted and misled by the strong love of sin. Hence he seems to have no power to say, Is not my whole system of religion a delusion? Is not this idol that I worship a *lie* in act, a mere falsehood, a vanity?

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

Remember what has just been said of the folly of idolatry, and the more rejoice in being the servants and the cherished friends of the Infinite God.

22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

The figure is two-fold. As clouds hide from us the face of the sun, so transgression hides from us the face of God: and again, as God brushes away the dark clouds with infinite ease when he will, and lets the sunshine come forth with double glory and sweetness, so he takes away the thick clouds of our sins and lets his own face shine forth in unwonted radiance upon us.

23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

Isaiah's full heart would fain move all heaven and all the lowest depths of the earth; all the mountains and forest trees also, to one vast choral song of praise to God for what he has done and is doing to redeem Jacob and glorify himself in Israel.—“*Hath redeemed*” and “*will glorify himself*,” imply that some of this work is seen by the prophet as past, and some of it, or at least, some of its results of glory to God, are seen as future. The redemption referred to may include the restoration from Babylon (seen in vision as past), yet cannot exclude many other deeds of like sort.

24. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, *I am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

The remaining verses of the chapter fall under one construction and really constitute but one complete sentence.—Thus saith the Lord who is thy Redeemer and thy Former from the womb; I am the Lord who maketh all things, doing also all else included in this series. These are some of his great works, enumerated to give his people more enlarged views of his power and of his loving care of every interest of his Zion.

25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

The “liars” and the “diviners” are false prophets and prognosticators whose pretended “signs” it was God's delight to frustrate and to take from them all wisdom and let them go mad.

26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

This "word of his servant" most naturally refers to Isaiah's own predictions. The spirit of inspiration, speaking through him, had predicted the restoration of the Jews from Babylon and the rebuilding of their city. All this God would fulfill.

27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

The only question on this verse is whether the reference to the Euphrates shall be considered exclusive; or only as included among other similar cases and under the general idea of power in God adequate to such results. There may be a tacit allusion to the Red Sea; or with a broader view the prophet may mean that God could readily dry the vast ocean and annihilate its mighty tides and currents. In this connection however, it cannot well be doubted that the words refer primarily to the fact that God's servant Cyrus dried the bed of the Euphrates and marched his army into the city in its dry channel, under the city walls. Both Herodotus (Book I.) and Xenophon in his *Cyropedeia* (Book VII.) describe this stratagem.

28. That saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd*, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

The facts in regard to Cyrus as indicated here are wonderful: how much more the definite prediction of them one hundred and seventy years before their occurrence! Cyrus was a man of extraordinary qualities, raised up of God to make a strong impression upon the world's history. In the whole cast of his character, and of his habits and purposes of life, he rose entirely above the style of the men of his time. But the greatest marvel is that the Lord could truly say of him, "*He is my shepherd*," destined to become the deliverer, the preserver, and the guardian of my chosen people. He shall live, not so much for purposes of his own as to "*perform all my pleasure*;" and more definitely still, he shall say to Jerusalem, "*Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, thy foundations shall be laid.*" In the last verses of the second book of Chronicles and in the first verses of Ezra, we have precisely the record of this event. "*The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Persia that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.*"—Among the human agents through whom God pleased to act on the mind of Cyrus, Daniel was doubtless most prominent. It is interesting to think how these two men, the master-minds of their generation, met each other; the venerable father, and the youthful conqueror; this father, the man who

had borne the administrative burdens of the great empires of the world for nearly three-score years and ten, and who had also borne on his very heart the woes and the destinies of his captive people through all these weary years; and this youthful conqueror, the rising, aspiring warrior before whose arms no earthly power had been able to stand, but who yet had the sagacity to discern the noble qualities of this patriarch of Babylon and Israel, and the good sense also to listen to his counsels. How the venerable sage won the confidence of the youthful warrior; how he lifted his thoughts to the great God who reigns above; how he availed himself of the historic testimonies recorded in his own book, which emanated from the preceding monarchs of Babylon; how he introduced to the notice of Cyrus these very prophecies of Isaiah and putting his finger upon them said, Thou art this very Cyrus, and the great God has given thee the empire of the world for the very purpose of making thee his servant to rebuild Jerusalem and to lay again the foundations of his sacred temple—of these things the details are not precisely given, but the great facts are put beyond dispute. Daniel had sought and found wisdom of his God for this service, and the Lord found here a new occasion to show that the hearts of kings are in his hand to turn them at his pleasure as the rivers of water are turned. When did the great God ever lack appropriate agencies for any work on which his heart is set?—Thus God made provision for the restoration of his people from Babylon, an event in itself extremely improbable and in many points of view very difficult. Consider the national policy of those great Eastern empires, Assyria and Chaldea, in respect to colonizing the restive populations of their remote provinces; reflect that this policy would quite forbid any general permission to return, and much more, any favorable action of the central government for such a purpose. Bear in mind, moreover, the very great difficulties to be overcome in the removal of any entire population so far, most of them on foot, with none of the modern facilities of travel and transportation. Or, estimate the difficulties by the actual results in the case of these Jewish exiles. Here was a people whose national love for their native land was proverbial and perhaps without a parallel, and who were warmly invited now by the Sovereign of all the East, affording them moreover every facility in his power; and yet, it seems that less than half of them returned to their father-land. They must have had a strong sense of the difficulties and hardships of the undertaking. But God had an object to subserve in bringing back a remnant of his people to their ancient home to rebuild the temple and to sustain the forms of the Mosaic worship yet five centuries longer, till in the fullness of time the great Messiah should appear. Hence, the political obstacles were all removed; the power in control of great Babylon became thoroughly subservient to his purposes; and so the thing was done!—"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Shall it ever again be questioned that the king's heart is in his hand? If

the Lord has occasion to use wicked kings of the earth, it is always with infinite ease that he makes the wrath of man work out his praise and effect his purposes; or if he needs the services of a good king to become the shepherd of his people, he readily brings forth the man, clothes him with power, and leads him on to execute his purposes.—Those critics (mostly German) who deny that the original Isaiah could have been the author of these chapters, make great account of the minuteness of this prophecy, which even gives the *name* of Cyrus though he became king almost two centuries after the death of Hezekiah. They aver that such minuteness of detail is without a parallel, and is entirely foreign from the style of Scripture prophecy. All other prophecies, they say, are general in their statements—so general that human sagacity, coupled with a sort of public anticipation of better days yet to come, will amply suffice to account for their existence.—The points to be made in reply to these positions are of this sort.—1. The affirmations made in respect to the general indefiniteness of prophecy are entirely too strong to correspond with the facts. Witness the prophecies respecting the Messiah,—one person, mentioned by name, with a very great number of special and minute circumstances connected with his birth, life, spirit, teachings, miracles, and death. Witness also the prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon. Jer. 50 and 51; also Isaiah 13 and 21: 1–10. 2. The particular circumstance of naming a king has its parallel in the case of Josiah, whose name was given in prophecy as far back as the reign of Jeroboam I., B. C. 975, and was fulfilled in Josiah's reformation B. C. 630. See 1 Kings 13: 2, and 2 Kings 23: 15–20. 3. It being admitted that prophecy is by inspiration of God, it can be no objection to any given case of prediction that it is unusually specific and definite. God will shape this feature according to his own wisdom. Fully aware of all the nice relations that exist between the free agency of man and the occurrence of events not only made certain in his divine purpose, but revealed beforehand for men themselves to study and understand, he will make them definite precisely when he thinks it wise to do so, and in all cases only as definite as his wisdom dictates. "Who, being his counsellor, hath taught him?"



## CHAPTER XLV.

**THIS** chapter continues the same general course of thought, beginning with a further description of the victories of Cyrus, and of his work as the deliverer of God's people; and then making this



great event the occasion and the ground for renewed declarations of God's infinite supremacy; of his worthiness to be trusted; of his purpose to confound all idols and idol-worshippers, and, with the co-operation of his true people, to bring all nations to acknowledge his name and to worship at his feet.

1. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut:

Remarkably the Lord applies to Cyrus the same descriptive term, "anointed," by which Jesus Christ is usually designated in prophecy. "Messiah" means precisely, *the anointed One*, and is the very Hebrew word used here. Some have considered this name a special indication that Cyrus was a type of the great Messiah. The just view seems to be that he was anointed as king for the special work which the Lord had for him to do, as Jesus was for his special work, while yet their respective missions were exceedingly unlike.—"Whose right hand I have *holden*," i. e., grasped, and firmly upheld to give him strength for his mission.—"To subdue nations," receives from history a striking fulfillment. The Greek historians name among these nations subdued by him, "the Medes [he was by birth a Persian]; Hyrcanians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians, Carians, Babylonians," etc. (Alexander.)—"Loosing the loins of kings," is naturally the opposite of girding up the loins. Since the latter indicates vigorous activity, the former implies the crippling of energy, the breaking down of power.—"Two-leaved gates" were folding or double doors. This prophetic allusion to the gates opened before him by the Lord in his providence, or caused by the same providence to be left open by their keepers, was fulfilled with entire precision. "It can scarcely be considered a fortuitous coincidence that Herodotus speaks of the gate which led to the river as having been left open on the night of the attack. Xenophon says the doors of the palace itself having been unguardedly opened, the invaders took possession of it almost without resistance." (Alexander.) Thus, though Babylon was supposed to be absolutely impregnable, yet God made its conquest easy to his anointed Cyrus. The lofty walls that encompassed the city were evaded by diverting the course of the river and marching his army along the empty river bed. The strong walls which lined the river banks on both sides through the midst of the city were rendered useless by leaving the gates open which led up into the city. Finally the palace-walls availed nothing, for the invaders found these gates open!

2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places

straight, I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

"Making the crooked places straight," compares with chap. 40: 4, in the sense of removing all serious obstacles and making his way feasible and even easy.—Herodotus and Abydenus both testify that the gates of Babylon were of brass. The prophet does not speak at random.

3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.

"Treasures of darkness" were carefully stored in dark recesses. The prophecy leads us to expect that Cyrus will amass immense treasures by his conquests. Accordingly history certifies that his conquest of Croesus, king of Lydia, whose name has been proverbial for immense riches, put into his possession an amount estimated at £126,000,000. This conquest shortly preceded that of Babylon.—The prophet intimates that these treasures, coming into his hand through God's providence, would be a sign to him that the Lord who had called him was the true God, the God of Israel. When these prophecies were shown him by the Jews, he could readily see in the extreme minuteness of their predictions and the perfect accuracy of their fulfillment that the God who wrought these results for him so marvelously was the same who had foretold them so precisely, and could be no other than the Omnipotent and Omniscient God. Josephus testifies that Cyrus read this prophecy. (See Antiquities of the Jews, 11: 1: 1, 2) His statements are in this form: "God stirred up the mind of Cyrus and made him write this throughout all Asia; Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God whom the nation of the Israelites worship, for indeed he foretold my name by the prophet; and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea." "This was known to Cyrus by his reading the books which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies."

4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

It was specially for the sake of redeeming his people that God raised up Cyrus.—"Calling by his name" includes calling him forth in his providence for his mission.—"Surnaming" (here as in chap. 44: 5), means to give a special name of honor, implying significant relations to him who gives the name. In this case the Lord refers to his calling him, "my shepherd," and "his anointed."

Correspondingly in the other passage (44: 5), the converts from Gentile nations assumed the name *Israel*.—"Though thou *hadst* not known me," i. e., previously to these revelations of myself.

5. I *am* the LORD, and *there is none* else, *there is no* God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me;

6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is none* besides me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is none* else.

These manifestations of the great God, both in his antecedent predictions respecting Cyrus, and in his wonderful providences in fulfilling them, had a vastly important purpose, viz., to make the true God known over all that Eastern world; to give them such demonstrations of his being, his omniscience, and his universal providence, as should at least suffice to convince all candid minds that he is the one only and infinite God, and that there can be no other besides.

7. I form the light and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.

The statements made in the previous verses give the clew (probably) to the special significance of this, viz., that the people of the distant East, the regions of the rising sun, might know that there is no God besides me. For Persia, pre-eminently to the Hebrews the land of the rising sun, was the home of the celebrated doctrine of Zoroaster, taught in the Zend-Avesta, viz., that there is *not* one God only, but virtually two; one the author of all good; the other, of all evil; one, the former of light; the other, of darkness. These two rival creators were held to be each eternal; and if not precisely equal, yet both indefinitely powerful, and by their very nature terribly and eternally antagonistic.—But squarely in opposition to this dualistic system, and that his word might go at once through all that Eastern world whence Cyrus came, the Lord here affirms that he alone both formed the light and created the darkness; both makes peace and creates evil; he, the one supreme Lord God, doeth all these things.—In this connection no attempt is made to expound elaborately the metaphysical philosophy of these affirmations, and show how the one infinitely good Being can both make the peace and create the evil of the universe. The immediate context, however, presents (as we shall see) two ideas bearing not remotely on this very point, viz., (1.) That God's direct purpose and aim are to create peace, to bring forth good (v. 8); and (2.) That the evil of our world results from the antagonism of creatures [not of an eternal creator, but of creatures], weak, yet wicked—weak, but awfully impudent, unreasonable, impious (v. 9.)

8. Drop down; ye heavens from above, and let the

skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.

When this ardent prophet, speaking for God and in sympathy with God, would summon all the active powers of the race to any special work, he is wont to call upon the heavens and the earth, as if to arouse all the realms of nature to combine and to help forward the mighty endeavor. So here, let the heavens from above pour down righteousness in glorious showers of blessings; let the earth open her warm bosom and send up righteousness and salvation bountifully: I the Lord have created these results—as if God would especially claim the paternity of all the moral good in the universe, and also as if it were his special work to inspire and guide all the active agencies of the universe to promote “righteousness” and “salvation.” This seems to be the scope of the passage, all its points bearing clearly and with precious truth upon God’s agencies as the author of “light” and “peace,” “darkness” and “evil” in his universe. His purpose and effort are wholly toward moral good. He rules the universe in the interests of virtue and consequent happiness.—A slight grammatical anomaly is apparent in the English version. “Let the earth open and let *them* bring salvation.” To what can the plural “*them*” refer? The most satisfactory construction is indicated by this translation; “Let the earth open” [her fertile bosom]; “Let salvation and righteousness shoot up and let” [the earth] “make them blossom together.”

9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10. Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

The special occasion for introducing the sentiment of these verses here seems to be *to indicate the origin of evil* as due to the uprising of man, a created and very weak agent; yet fearfully perverse, unreasonable, ungrateful, vile. This view of the occasion connects these verses naturally with the declarations in verses 6, 7.—In the clause, “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth,” the reader will observe that the words “let” and “strive” are supplied without anything corresponding to them in the original. The translators probably meant to give this sense; If potsherds [weak, worthless men] will quarrel, let them quarrel with their own kind; not with God. Two other constructions are grammatically admissible, and in point of

sentiment either is preferable to this.—(1.) “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker—him who is only a potsherd of earthen potsherds,” *i. e.*, only such a thing as a mere potsherd of clay ; or (2.) Woe to him who striveth with his Maker [as] a potsherd [strives] with potsherds of earth, *i. e.*, as frail man with his fellows. The use of the Hebrew particle [eth] before both the word for “his Maker” and the word for “potsherds” strongly favors this construction.—Thus the choice seems to lie between these constructions : (a.) That of our English version in which the imperative “*Let,*” etc., is altogether without authority, and the resulting sense is quite remote from the context : —(b.) Putting the clause in apposition to describe more fully the case and character of him who wickedly strives with his Maker. In this way the sense is good. The great body of modern critics adopt this.—(c.) Assuming that the clause in question is not precisely in apposition, but is subjoined as a comparison for illustration : Who strives with his Maker *as* weak man does with weak men. This last is entirely in harmony with the course of thought and with the construction of the sentence.—The Hebrew word used here for “Maker” means legitimately both Maker in the sense of Creator and a potter who manufactures earthen ware. We might bring out this sense of the Hebrew by a paraphrase ; Woe to him who striveth with the Infinite Potter [God]—this “*him*” being nothing more than a potsherd—a worthless fragment of broken pottery, cast out as refuse, and never at best anything but molded and burnt clay. The word “earth” represents the *material* of which this potsherd is made, it being the same word used by Moses for the “ground” out of which the Lord made man (Gen. 2 : 7.)—“Shall *thy* work” (put the case to thyself) shall the work which thou thyself dost manufacture say of thee, “He hath no hands ?”—These questions are all in the same strain, the creature not merely boasting against his Creator as in chap. 10 : 15, but *striving* against him, demanding of him what he has made and denying his creatorship ! Verily this is consummate impiety ! Such a spirit in man amply accounts for the production of all the evil that exists in this world.—If the question be raised ; Can a holy Creator give existence to a sinful creature ? the question is answered here in a most practical way ; Yes ; else there were no occasion for this woe on him who wars against his Maker. Else there could be no such horrid sin as that of this small but proud, this comparatively worthless yet boldly impudent *creature*, calling in question the wisdom and goodness of his Infinite Creator, and even disputing his Creatorship.—The old dualistic argument, often put in the question, Is it supposable that a good Creator will give existence to a creature who can and will sin ? is met here by an appeal to facts. Here is a

creature, made by God with moral powers, capable therefore of holiness or of sin—and *he sins*.—The further question, Where lies the guilt of this sinning? is equally met by the woe which God denounces upon this sinner, and by the verdict of universal conscience and reason that this denounced woe is infinitely just and right. *Such a sin*—think of it! a child dishonoring his father—contemning his mother!

11. Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

The logical connection of thought here is plain and beautiful. Instead of presuming to call in question the wisdom and goodness of God, the Great Maker and Ruler of all, go rather to him in due humility and ask him to reveal the future destinies of his sons, since these are all determined in his all-wise plans and counsels; and in respect to the work of his hands, *commit* all to him. His wisdom is perfect. He makes no mistakes. Whatever "work" is for him to do, leave trustfully to his wisdom and power.—In the last clause, "command" must certainly be taken, not in the sense of *dictate*, but of *committing*, entrusting. The sense, dictate, would fall under the condemnation of those stern and just rebukes in vs. 9, 10, i. e., would be squarely *against* the context instead of being in harmony with it. The original word bears the sense of commit, entrust.

12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

This claim of being universal Creator may have two intended bearings, one upon the verse next preceding, as if to say, Commit to me everything that can possibly affect the welfare of my sons, *for the Infinite Creator must have all power*: and the other upon the dualistic system, referred to in v. 7, in relation to which the Great God here asserts that he is the only Creator of the universe.—The last word of this verse, "commanded," may be taken in the military sense, corresponding to the figure which conceives of the stars as the martial hosts of the Lord under his military command; or the verb may as well be taken in the sense of arranging, assigning their places and their motions. The general idea is that of universal creatorship and control.

13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.

I, the same God who created all worlds, evermore controlling all events, have also raised up *him*, Cyrus. I have done it *in righteousness, i. e.*, for purposes of justice and righteousness both toward my people whom I am to redeem, and toward the guilty king of Babylon whom in justice I must destroy. The words do not refer to the character of Cyrus as good or just, but to the purpose of God in raising him up.—The last clause means that Cyrus would send home those Jewish exiles without demanding any redemption price, doing it of his own generous and free will.

14. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee; and *there is none else, there is no God.*

The next thought in order is the accession of the Gentiles to the true church of God, with their wealth, and of course with their hearts. Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sabeans are named here because they are named in chap. 43 : 3, and as specimens of the whole Gentile world, the promise applying not less to all other nations.—The phrase, "In chains shall they come over," may be supposed to conceive of them as captives or prisoners; or it may refer to their voluntary submission and consecration to the living God. The latter involves least difficulty.—"Falling down and making supplication" must be qualified so as to mean in reference to the church nothing more than a profound respect; but as toward God, real and profound worship, as the next clause shows. God is in thee and no where else; and he is the only God. That they fall down before the church and make supplication to her is a way of saying strongly, *We see God in thee.* Compare chaps. 60, and also 49 : 22, 23, where the nations come to Zion with their wealth to adorn her sanctuary. No other interpretation is at all admissible except that which applies these passages to the conversion of the Gentiles.

15. Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

That God should disclose thoughts of mercy so deep, plans for converting the nations so vast and far-reaching, affects the prophet's mind powerfully. He pauses to say, How little had I known of God before! "Thou art a God that hidest thyself!" How long the world has lain in darkness, ignorant of these glorious plans of God for its ultimate conversion! Surely the



God of such promises should be known by this one great name, "The God of Israel," his own spiritual Zion, "the Savior!" He wears this name most worthily!

16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols.

17. *But* Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Two grand facts are here put in antithesis; (1.) That the makers of idols shall be confounded and put to shame. (2.) That the true Israel shall be saved with everlasting salvation and never be put to shame through disappointment by the failure of her God to fulfill his promises. These promises, now fresh in mind and deeply affecting, are in these words guaranteed against possible failure.

18. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: *I am* the LORD, and *there is* none else.

19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

That God "made the earth to be inhabited" is significant here in connection with this prophecy of the ultimate conversion of the nations, as much as to say; I have not only made this earth "all very good," but I made it to sustain a vast population, and my ultimate purpose is to bring all these nations up to the gates of Zion to say there, "Surely God is in thee and there is none else, no other God."—And whereas the prophet had said, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," the Lord replies; "I have not spoken these things in secret, in a dark place of the earth, but here in the midst of Jerusalem, among my professed people. It may also be supposed that the Lord intends to put his revelations in contrast with the responses of heathen oracles which came up from deep and dark places of the earth as things that have an instinctive abhorrence of light.—I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek me for nothing—for no valuable result. All honest seeking shall be richly successful; all honest service, abundantly rewarded. Ye may rely on every word I say. All is said *in righteousness*. The consulters of heathen oracles get their responses from dark places only to be disappointed thereby; but the seed of Jacob seek a God of light,



and never in vain.—If we may suppose the prediction of salvation to the Gentiles is still before the mind from vs. 14–18, then this good word, “*Ye of Jacob shall never seek me in vain,*” is suggestive of duty and hope in reference to labor and prayer for the world’s salvation. God would have his people pray for this result, and pledges himself that such prayers shall not be unavailing.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save.

21. Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from the ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.

To hasten the desired and promised result of converting the nations to God, the summons goes forth, Call them together; let us have a vast convocation: let all those who have survived the judgments of God on guilty nations gather together; let them consider first how utterly ignorant and senseless are all those who set up the wood of their graven image and pray to a god who can not save. Then let them also consider who hath brought out such minute and wonderful predictions of the distant future, which have moreover been so accurately fulfilled. Is not He who hath done all this, the true Jehovah, the Omniscient God? Do not these fulfilled predictions prove him to be indeed the one only God? Yea, let them know that he is a just God and a Savior, combining perfect justice with boundless mercy; a God whom sinners should fear to offend, yet dare to approach suppliantly, and to whom they should surely be attracted by his great mercies. Let them know once for all that there is no other God, and forever discard their vain idols!—Plainly it is the divine plan that fulfilled prophecy shall be an element of great power in convincing the heathen of the truth of his claim to be the one only God.

22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.

These great truths crystalize into this broad and blessed invitation, addressed to all people on the wide earth—the most remote as well as the least—saying: “Look unto me and be ye saved.” Look away from every other name given under heaven—away from idols however ancient and however long revered and honored by the fathers, or however splendid their temples, or fascinating

their orgies of worship;—from all such helpers turn away and look to the great God alone, and so be ye saved! For he alone is God; there is none else.

23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in righteousness*, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

God is supreme and will yet be acknowledged to be so by every rational being. Every knee shall bow to him in this acknowledgment—freely and lovingly, or by compulsion and fear, for the language of this statement is not restricted to the voluntary submission of real converts. It is (apparently of purpose) made sufficiently general to include both the voluntary submission of the redeemed and the coerced subjection of the incorrigibly impenitent. —Paul quotes this passage twice, first applying it (Rom. 14: 11) to the whole world standing before Christ's judgment seat and recognizing his infinite supremacy there; and again (Phil. 2: 9–11) to Christ's glorious exaltation by the Father to the throne of the universe, with perhaps a tacit reference to the same judgment seat.—The second clause is more precisely, The word is gone out from a *mouth of righteousness*, a mouth that can never speak falsely, but only in harmony with justice and truth.—That "it shall not return" means that it shall not fail of accomplishing its purpose and of evincing itself true.

24. Surely shall *one* say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

These verses speak of two moral classes, moral opposites in character, as comprehended under the general statements of the previous verses. One class come to Jehovah, saying, "In the Lord is my righteousness and strength." In him shall all these be justified, freely forgiven and accepted as righteous before God, and in him shall they glory; or as in the original, "sing hallelujahs." —The other class are incensed against God, enraged in the spirit of a mad persistent rebellion; and they shall be confounded; all their hopes perishing utterly and forever! Alas, for them!

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE case so often put already in these later prophecies, *Jehovah vs. idols*, becomes in this chapter specific; God *vs.* the idols of Babylon. The great city is seen in prophetic vision, conquered; the vanquished people pack their helpless images upon their beasts of burden to bear them away; the heavy laden animals stagger and sink under their load, and the god himself is powerless to help. But Jehovah, instead of being borne, himself bears his people; and shall he be compared to a graven or a molten god?—Once more the Lord appeals to his past achievements and to the mission of Cyrus, so signally fulfilling the divine counsels, and closes with exhorting the ungodly to hear, renewing his promise of salvation near to come for his people.

1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavily laden; *they are* a burden to the weary beast.

Bel and Nebo were the chief gods of Babylon, named here to represent the whole set. Etymologically, the word Bel comes from Baal, and Nebo from a word which means a prophet or interpreter. —As the whole system of idolatry bore close relations to Sabianism (the worship of the heavenly bodies), these names, Bel and Nebo, represented Jupiter and Mercury, and corresponded in position to the gods who bore these names in the Grecian mythology.—The high honor accorded to these gods appears in the royal names into which theirs were incorporated, *e. g.*, *Belshazzar*, *Belteshazzar*, *Belesis*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Nebuzaradan*, *Nabopolassar*.—Here the prophet sees these gods brought down from their lofty position of honor, not condescending or stooping voluntarily, but humiliated and brought down by a force they could not withstand. Their images are packed upon beasts of burden.—“Your carriages,” are not vehicles, but the load itself, in the ancient and nearly obsolete sense of this word; the same which we find (1 Sam. 17: 22) where David is said to have “left his carriage,” *i. e.*, his burden, the provisions borne by him to his brethren.—Your load is loaded, *i. e.*, placed on the back of the animals, a burden to the weary beasts.—The prophet in keen sarcasm expresses his pity for the poor animals, doomed to stagger under such a load!

2. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

These poor beasts sink down under their burden, quite unable to carry it through and deliver it at the desired point.—The verbs rendered, “stoop,” and “bow down,” are the same which in v. 1 are used of Bel and Nebo, the thought being that the beasts are borne down to the earth very much as those gods were brought down by the heavy hand of God’s providential judgments.—The last clause of the verse means that the gods themselves as distinct from their images, were borne away into captivity, powerless to resist the Almighty or even to render any aid to the poor beasts, staggering under their crushing load.—The whole scene is intensely graphic and keen in its caustic irony. The full force of it will not be seen till we take into view the current notions of the age in respect to these gods as the tutelary defenders of their worshipers, and consequently as themselves going into captivity with the nation whom they should have saved if they could—with whose fortunes therefore their own were knit together. See Jer. 48: 7; “Chemosh, (god of Moab) shall go into captivity with his priests and princes together;” or Jer. 49: 3, “Malcom” (the god of Ammon) “shall go into captivity,” etc. Also Dan. 11: 8, and Hos. 10: 5, 6, and 1 Sam. 5: 1.

3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

4. And *even* to *your* old age I *am* he; and *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.

In beautiful contrast with that scene, the Lord calls the attention of his people to his own relations to them; not borne by them on their weary beasts who sink under their load, but himself bearing them on his bosom as the mother bears her babe, and this not merely during helpless infancy but onward even to old age; and finally at the end of their life-journey delivering them safely into their everlasting rest. Verily such a God meets the heart-felt wants of frail mortals!

5. To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

Where else can such a God as Jehovah be found! With what else can he be even compared? Would you think to compare him with idol gods? Pause and look at those powerless things—which he proceeds to describe.

6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

This is more brief, but substantially corresponds to the picture drawn, chap. 44: 12-20. If you would comprehend the nature and powers of these idols, see how they are made. Trace their history from the very outset of their existence. Take the best specimens, those prepared by the wealthy classes who have money to lavish and who spare it not. An additional point of sarcasm is made here by the use of the word "*el*" for this idol god; "and so he makes it the mighty (!) god." They bear him on the shoulder; they set him in his place; and there—poor thing! he must needs stand, for he is powerless to move! They cry unto him for help, but no answer ever comes, and no salvation!

8. Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.

Addressing idolaters, the Lord calls upon them to remember these facts in respect to their idol gods and to show themselves men by using the reason God has given them. "In understanding, be men" (1 Cor. 14: 20). Recall these things again and again; reflect upon them; be not senseless and brutish, but rational; and ask, can such an idol be the ever-living and Almighty God?

9. Remember the former things of old: for *I am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me.

10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Apparently the same persons are still addressed. The Lord asks them to recall "the former things"—either his former achievements, or possibly, predictions which have been fulfilled; in either case, things which would prove him to be the "supreme and only living God." Here, as often, the Lord appeals to his predictions as made known to men by the gift of prophecy, showing that he reveals the distant future even from the very beginning of time or of the series of events contemplated, and always speaks with authority; "My counsel shall stand;" whatever I will, shall be!

11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man

that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have *purposed* it, I will also do it.

For a special case the Lord once more appeals (as in chap. 41: 2, 25, and 44: 28, and 45: 1-4) to his calling forth Cyrus from the East—here under the figure of a bird of prey—*e. g.*, the eagle. As before (41: 3) he did not seem to travel the way with his feet, such was the rapidity of his movements; so here, the lofty, tireless flight of the eagle best represents his power and celerity. He comes to execute the high behests of the Almighty. Let the heathen see in this case the infinite sway of the Almighty God in the realm of universal providence, and acknowledge that in very deed, he is truly God.

12. Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that *are* far from righteousness.

13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The stout-hearted [Heb. "strong of heart"] are those who boldly and defiantly oppose God.—Their being "far from righteousness" means that they are utterly unrighteous, void of integrity and uprightness. The Lord implores such to listen to his call. Reckless and desperate though they may be, yet the great compassion of God beseeches them to consider their ways, to cease from their folly and madness, and to return to reason and to their divine Father.—The last verse turns the thought. *They* are far from righteousness, but *I* bring my righteousness near. I propose to manifest my righteous displeasure against sin and sinners, and bring my justice into active exercise toward the wicked; and on the other hand, my salvation for my people shall not linger, for I will glorify myself in saving my Israel, and glorify them by my distinguishing mercy.—All these points bear impressively to enforce the kind appeals which God makes to stout-hearted sinners to consider their ways and be wise, to make peace with their God, so that their destiny at his hand may be, not destruction, but salvation.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

IN the previous chapter the idols of proud Babylon have been brought low, and their utter powerlessness to save evinced; coupled

with which, the Lord of Hosts signified in the closing verse that he would shortly reveal his justice in punishing his enemies and in saving his friends. Now, in this chapter the Lord proceeds to describe the execution of this doom of his enemies. Babylon represents them. Thought of as a queenly woman, the ideal personification of the city, people and sovereignty, she is bidden to come down and sit on the ground. Her debasement and fall with the reasons for it and the circumstances attending, fill out the chapter.

1. Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: *there is no throne*, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

This figure which represents a city with its people as a virgin and daughter is frequently applied to Jerusalem. See chap. 37: 22. A desolate female sitting on the ground, is an expressive symbol of dejection, dishonor, and bitter grief. Compare chap. 3: 26, and Lam. 2: 10.—These two words are forcibly expressive, "*no throne!*" no longer any throne for thee; no more regal dominion; no more of the dignity and honor of royal power.—The name, "Daughter of the Chaldeans," implies that Babylon was originally built by the Chaldean people.—"Shalt no more be called," according to the usage of Isaiah, must mean, thou shalt no more be accounted delicate, refined, because thou shalt no longer *be so*. Thy days of queenly dignity and honor are past forever.

2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.

3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as a man*.

Her debasement is compared to the change from being a queen to being an abject slave. As in v. 1, so here the prediction of this change takes the form of command. Go, virgin daughter, strip off every badge of royalty; put on the wretched covering of the female slave and do her menial service.—"Take the mill-stones," *i. e.*, of the small hand-mill—a necessity in every oriental family, with which the grinding for each day's use was done every morning, and always done by the lowest class of servants. It indicates the relative dishonor attached to woman wherever Christianity has not elevated her, that in all the East these lowest servants are always of the female sex.—"Uncover thy locks," is precisely, *strip off thy veil*. One of the Arabian poets speaks of certain ladies as appearing unveiled, so that they resembled slaves. Oriental travelers speak of ladies and all women not slaves, as appearing in public

veiled.—The next phrase should have been translated, "Strip off thy flowing robes," a dress with a long flowing train—another badge of the free and the honored class as opposed to the enslaved.—It is not entirely clear whether the clause, "ford the rivers," means literally flee into captivity, fording the streams as you go; or merely, assume this half-naked state—the attire of the slave, and do her menial service. Her exposure of person would indicate and measure her debasement, the utter change of her condition from queenly dignity to abject servility. All this comes of the vengeance of the Lord upon her for her great sins.—In the last clause, the words, "thee as," are supplied without authority in the original. The English translators meant to give the sense, I will meet thee with the power of a God. The Hebrew scarcely bears this construction. The verb rendered "meet" means to *strike*, to to strike against, to fall upon; then to *strike hands with*, in the sense of a mutual covenant. Hence we may choose between the construction of Gesenius, "I will not make peace with man," but will destroy all; or that of Rosenmueller, "I shall strike against no man;" i. e., shall encounter no opposition; shall not need to come into collision with any effective antagonist. The ultimate sense is that of complete destruction.

4. *As for our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.*

The apparent abruptness and want of logical connection between this verse and the preceding are relieved when we consider that retributive judgment on Babylon was mercy and salvation to Zion. It was for the sake of saving Zion and of punishing Babylon for her cruel oppression of God's people that these terrible judgments came upon her. Hence the thought here. Utter destruction upon Babylon is only what might be expected, for our Redeemer is the Lord of Hosts, King of the armies of heaven, bearing this name because he is such in fact and therefore clothed with all power to avenge his people on their oppressors. He is the Holy One of Israel, and therefore her Defender and Avenger.

5. *Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.*

Let thy voice be heard no more; let thy person be seen no more; is only a way of predicting that this should be the fact. Babylon should pass into obscurity, and ere long, cease to be. She had been the queen of kingdoms in the sense in which the proud Assyrian said (chap. 10; 8), "Are not my princes altogether kings? Am I not a king of kings, having many crowned heads among my vassals and tributaries?"

6. *I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine*



inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

This verse first assigns the reason why God gave Babylon power to enslave his people, and then sets forth their abuse of this power through excessive cruelty and national ambition.—God was offended with his people for their great sins and their incorrigible perverseness. “Pollute,” as used here, means to ignore its former sacredness, and treat it as profane, and subject therefore to violation. God had dishonored even his own once sacred temple, and had cast it down as a vile thing—so horribly had the people defiled it by their hypocrisy and their countless crimes.—That Babylon had made her yoke heavy even upon “the ancients,” the aged, is one of the proofs of her aggravated cruelty. The Lord never fails to hold nations responsible for such violations of natural right, and of the impulses of common humanity. See Amos 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, etc. To this eternal law, written on all hearts, even the most ignorant heathen are held amenable. Rom. 2: 14, 15.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

“Lady” is the same word which appears in v. 5, “the *queen* of kingdoms.” She was so confident of the perpetuity of this honor that she would not think of the natural consequences of such cruelty, would not consider the latter end and the sure though possibly distant results of such crimes.—The form of statement in the Hebrew is peculiar, yet forcible. “Thou saidst, Forever shall I be a queen—*until* thou didst not lay these things upon thy heart,” i. e., thou didst repeat it with persistence and force *until* it produced this result, viz., to harden thy heart against all sense and fear of retribution. The Lord assumes that nations ought to know and consider that cruelty brings retribution in the latter end and that the violation of natural right is sure to react with righteous vengeance.—This law pertains to all nations through all time. Even old Babylon never had magnificence and prowess enough to lift her above its jurisdiction; nor have the proudest or the mightiest nations of modern times.

8. Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I *am*, and none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

9. But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multi-

tude of thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

The same Babylon, before shown under the figure of a virgin, is here, by a slight change, a wife with children. She has been intensely pleasure-loving, dwelling in supposed security and saying, "None so great and mighty as I. I have put myself above the reach of great calamity."—The loss of children and of husband are fitly named as the most fearful calamities that can befall a wife and mother. It is better to take them therefore as figures for the greatest calamities that can befall a nation, *e. g.*, subjugation, captivity, and the sword, rather than to give them the more specific sense of the loss of her king (her husband) and of her soldiers or citizens (as her sons).—Both these dire calamities came upon her in their full strength "in one day"—in that eventful night in which Cyrus took the city. See Dan. 5: 30.—The phrase, "For the multitude of thy sorceries," etc., may more strictly be rendered *in, i. e.*, in the midst of thy sorceries and enchantments, and hence, *in despite* of their help, as well as *because of* her sin in those things. Sorceries, magic arts and enchantments, were no where more rife than in ancient Babylon. This fact is "expressly affirmed by Diodorus Siculus and assumed as notorious by other ancient writers." (Alexander.) Isaiah assumes it—chap. 2: 6, "replenished from the East," etc.

10. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I *am*, and none else besides me.

Thou didst fancy thyself secure in thy wickedness, is probably the sense, rather than this; Thou didst rely on thy wickedness to save thee. She was like those who commit crimes in darkness. They do not trust *in* their crimes to protect them, but rather feel secure despite of their crimes, because they hope to escape detection.—Her wisdom and knowledge which had perverted her moral sense so that she had no proper fear or abhorrence of wrongdoing, may be either her supposed but unreal wisdom, such as her skill in magic arts; or her sagacity in political affairs. In either case she thought herself wise above other nations, and therefore above all danger from any of them.

11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

Ruin came upon her, unanticipated, sudden, and interminable.

The second clause is, "Thou shalt not know its *dawn*." Since calamity suggests darkness and often appears in the scriptures under this figure, the probable sense of this phrase is, Thou shalt see no dawn beyond it. To you, no day shall follow this night of ruin. This construction is the more probable because Isaiah has precisely the same figure, chap. 8: 20. See notes there. This case and that correspond in the special feature of seeking light and help from magic arts and necromancy, the meaning of the prophet in both passages being, those who go forth for light into that realm of darkness shall see no dawn of day forever!—In the phrase, "Thou shalt not be able to *to put it off*," the margin follows the Hebrew and gives the true sense; Thou shalt have no power to *expiate* it; thou canst make no atonement which will avail to remove the curse.

12. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

"*Stand now with.*" The word for "now" has no reference to time, but implies entreaty; *pray*, do this; used here probably with a tinge of irony. The word for "with" is usually best represented by *in*, stand *in* thine enchantments, combining the two ideas of persisting in those practices and of relying upon them. "Go on, hoping still for help from thy witchcrafts and incantations in which thou hast been wearying thyself from the very youth of the nation; *perhaps* thou wilt get help; *perhaps* thou mayest inspire terror, *i. e.*, become formidable to thine enemies." The last verb is used in this sense, chap. 2: 21. "When God ariseth to terrify the earth."—By the concurrent testimony of all ancient history, magic arts received special attention in Babylon from her youth. It was therefore specially pertinent to put her to the experiment of testing their power to help in this her last extremity.

13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

She had wearied herself in devising schemes for her safety, overtaxing her brains and exhausting her wisdom. It was therefore precisely the sort of an emergency in which to call in the aid of her astrologers. According to the sense of the original word, they *divided* the visible heavens into sections for the purposes of astrological practices. The "monthly prognosticators" imparted their knowledge *at the full moons*, improving that opportunity to teach and probably taking auguries from appearances in the heavens at that time. Let all these pretenders to superhuman knowledge come

forward in this emergency and give thee relief.—The words “Pray let them *stand forth*,” may allude tacitly to the same verb in the beginning of v. 12. The prophet says to Babylon, “*Stand* in thine enchantments;” and of her astrologers, “Let them *stand*,” i. e., let there be a mutual effort on all hands to put these arts and their operators to the most thorough test, and see how much aid they will bring to Babylon in the hour of her extremity.

14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.*

Here is the result. Instead of affording to Babylon the least help, these magicians are themselves awfully consumed. They are as stubble; fire devours them. They can not even save themselves; much less the nation and the people.—The last clause seems to mean that the fire of this conflagration brings all the mischiefs and calamities of a fire with none of its uses. This fire is not of the sort before which one may warm himself or sit by it to enjoy its light. It is simply a terrible conflagration, bearing nothing but destruction in its sweep.

15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored, *even thy merchants*, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Such is the doom of those with whom thou hast wrought even to weariness to find help from them for thyself. The fire of God's judgments has utterly consumed them. The masoretic punctuation makes the long pause here, and not after the word “youth,” thus; “Thy merchants from thy youth” (i. e., who have been with thee from thy youth) “have scattered, every one going his way, and no one saves thee.” The magicians destroyed by fire (this is the figure) and the merchants (her wealthy classes probably) dispersed in every direction to other homes and other openings for trade and wealth, she is left with none to help her. This scattering of her merchants probably corresponds to the similar dispersion of her foreign population spoken of chap. 13: 14, and Jer. 50: 16, and 51: 9.



## CHAPTER XLVIII.

Considering chaps. 40–66 as constituting one distinct portion of Isaiah's prophecies, in many respects one homogeneous whole, there is yet ground for subdivisions. It may be fitly subdivided

into three sections of nine chapters each, the chapter before us closing the first section.—A peculiar feature of this chapter is that it contemplates Israel, the chosen people of God, as sorely defective in their allegiance to him. I think this to be a more precise statement than to say that it addresses the corrupt portion of the covenant people, or even the covenant people at some particular period when apostasy was nearly universal. The chapter does not draw discriminations between the faithful and the unfaithful in the same corporate body, nor does it indicate any particular time, but rather speaks of the body as being very corrupt, as not calling on God's name in truth and righteousness (v. 1); as being obstinate (v. 3), as having dealt very treacherously (v. 8), as having provoked God's anger (v. 9), as needing severe discipline (v. 10). The most ardent desire is expressed that they had been obedient and true to God (v. 18).—This manifestly looks at the dark side of the religious life of God's people. It takes up this dark side as the special subject of consideration, almost to the exclusion of any other view throughout the chapter. The same view has been taken briefly before, *e. g.*, chaps. 42: 19–25, and 43: 22–28.—The moral aim of the chapter is obvious. Its bearings are naturally wholesome. In Isaiah's time and onward to the coming of Christ, there was painful occasion for such an expose of the imperfect piety of God's professed people. It was needful in order to put their sins distinctly before their own eyes; to impress them with the fact that God saw those sins and estimated their guilt perfectly; to induce repentance; to keep them humble; to prevent their being elated with their distinguished honor as God's chosen people; to make them feel that this distinction was not due to their merit, but to the fact that God had purposes of glorious mercy for our race and chose them as his instruments in his sovereignty for his higher ends and not at all because of their good deserts.—Remarkably, the points brought forward and made to bear upon the chosen people, contemplated thus as very defective in their piety, are to a great extent the same which have been most prominent in the previous chapters., *e. g.*, the existence, perfections and creatorship of God; his foreknowledge as evinced repeatedly in prophecy; his wonderful providence in raising up Cyrus, and his great mercies toward his people.

1. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth, nor in righteousness.*

This verse strikes the key-note of the chapter in respect to the point of view in which God's people are contemplated. They are insincere and untruthful in their religious professions. "They swear by the name of the Lord," entering into formal covenant to

be his, and they make mention of his name as their God; but, alas! not in truth or in righteousness.—We need not suppose this to be a universal fact. But there were many of whom this was true. Their presence in such numbers is for the time being considered as giving character to the body, and therefore they are all addressed and these great sins are charged upon them with no qualifying discriminations.—The clause, “come forth out of the waters of Judah,” represents Judah under the figure of a fountain of which his offspring are the streams. See the same figure Ps. 68: 26; “Bless the Lord, ye of the fountain of Israel.” By a different yet analogous figure, Isaiah writes (51: 1), “Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged;” *i. e.*, to your parental ancestry.

2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel: The LORD of hosts is his name.

In deciding upon the logical connection of this verse with the preceding, the choice lies between taking it as a continued description of the insincere professions of the people; or as a view of the better side of their character, adduced here as a reason for encouragement in delivering the message of this chapter, thus: “I call on you to hear this message, *for* your name as God’s people is taken from his holy city and ye have reposed upon the God of Israel. Such being your prerogatives and privileges and such being the actual experience of some of you, I am encouraged to present and press these rebukes and calls from God.—On the first supposition, the sense is readily understood. We have only to bring forward the qualifying phrase, “not in truth, nor in righteousness.”

3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.

This speaks of prophecies already fulfilled. The particular phrases have occurred before in this series (chaps. 40–47). Those prophecies and their fulfillment were designed to bear upon the piety of God’s people, impressing them with a sense of his presence among them, of his infinite knowledge, and especially of his *foreknowledge* of all things, and of the universal agencies of his providence. All these points should make hypocrites and apostates tremble.

4. Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;

5. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou

shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

The special reasons assigned here for the mission of the prophets and for the messages they bore, reveal a degree of apostasy that is startling. Because the people were morally hardened so that their neck was an iron sinew (stiff-necked), and their brow unyielding as brass: and lest, if God had not predicted the events beforehand they would have attributed them to their idol gods.—The first clause of v. 5 might better be read, “and so or consequently, I told thee long ago:” *i. e.*, because I knew how hardened thou wast and how perversely thou wouldst ascribe these events to thy idols if I had not forestalled thee by giving thee predictions of these events beforehand.

6. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

Thou hast heard those predictions; now pause and take a calmer view of them all. And will not ye declare, *i. e.*, announce some prophecy? The same word, “*declare*,” is used in v. 5, for the announcement of prophecy, and therefore it can not well bear any other sense here.—The question assumes that they are not likely to accord its due weight to the fact that God had given them real prophecy. Hence he says, “Try your own skill upon it. Put forth some new prophecy. I am doing so now. If you are disposed to make small account of mine, put forth some of your own!”

7. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

I understand this to refer still to the new prophecies, spoken of in the verse previous, though the use of the verb “create” for the production of a prophecy seems peculiar. But the verse itself as well as the context requires this sense.—These prophecies are brought out now and not of old, yet before thou hadst heard any thing of these events, lest if it had been otherwise, thou wouldest have said, I knew that myself. God must needs make the evidence of his prescience in prophecy and of his hand in fulfilling it, very conclusive, even resistless, or those hardened and idol-worshipping men will deny him the honor of it and claim it for their gods, or insist that their own sagacity had already seen it. A dark view indeed of their perverseness and moral blindness!

8. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.



This makes a new point, stating a fact which stands somewhat in antithesis with what precedes.—The first word rendered “yea” (followed by a negative) gives this turn of thought; *But this also is true*, viz., that thou hast not heard much prophecy; hast known almost nothing about it, and thine ear has not been opened to hear; and therefore the Lord must needs withhold in great measure such manifestations of himself, for he says, “I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously.” The principle which underlies this policy is brought out by our Lord in his relations to the Scribes and Pharisees in a similar moral state; “Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.” “Because they seeing see not, neither do they understand.” Matt. 13: 10–16. The Lord knew they would only pervert and abuse the light he should give them, and therefore he gave them light only in small amount. Hence these hardened perverse men received far less light from prophecy than they otherwise would, because the Lord knew they would not make a good use of it.—In the last clause, “called” must imply (as usual) that they were called so because they were so. From the very infancy of the nation [“from the womb”] such had been their character. It is not material whether this point of infancy lie back of their sojourning in Egypt. That is often accounted the birth-hour of the nation.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

Under great provocation, the Lord yet restrained himself from inflicting the punishment they had deserved. Again and again with great long suffering he had postponed the infliction of his judgments to give them yet another trial. He had done this for his own name's sake, and not because of any good desert in them. He had held himself back from utterly cutting them off, *e. g.*, when they sinned most grievously in the matter of the golden calf (Ex. 32: 7–10, 30–35). A great and wholesome moral lesson is here!

10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

The Lord had not cut them off utterly in just retribution, but he had often sought to refine them in discipline, as the refiner purifies his silver ore to separate the pure metal from its dross. The words, “but not with silver,” are supposed by most commentators to mean, not with the result of obtaining real silver. My efforts have not been largely successful.—Egypt, where God first manifested his choice of the nation as such, was historically their “furnace of affliction.” To this the last clause may allude. See Deut. 4: 20. 1 Kings 8: 51, and Jer. 11: 4.—The history of



God's repeated efforts to purify Israel by discipline was humiliating to them. The results had been meager because of their extreme perverseness. Let them realize how much they owed to their nation's great Father for his long suffering, and for his condescension in accepting them at all while so entirely unworthy. Let them know that all God's mercies had been shown them for his own name's sake and not for their sakes, as the next verse affirms.

11. For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

"How should my name be polluted?" may mean, either; How greatly it would be! or, how should I bear to allow it to be?—"Polluted" is used in the sense of violated, treated as profane, in contrast with being held in honor.—It was widely known among the nations that the Lord had chosen Israel as his peculiar people. Their doctrine was that every god protected and blessed his own people to the full extent of his ability, so that his success as their Patron and Defender measured his prowess, relatively to other gods—patrons of other nations. Hence God's name was committed before the nations; his honor was in a measure identified with their prosperity. What now if he were to wipe them out from being a nation? On a similar supposition Joshua made the plea; "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" (Josh. 7: 9.)

12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

His regard for the glory of his name moved him to appeal yet again to their moral sense. Let my people, called mercifully to be my own, listen to my voice, declaring that I am God alone. This fact bore directly and powerfully against their propensity to idols. It was also an impressive fact, apart from its relations to idol worship. No truths are more vital to piety than the existence and perfections of the one glorious God.

13. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together.

The last clause reads literally, "I *am* calling them; they stand up together." Hence it should naturally refer, not to the original creation of the heavenly bodies, but to God's present control over them. They obey his orders as his willing servants. He calls; they stand forth promptly to do his bidding. God's agency is no less active and essential in sustaining every star and planet in its sphere, than in their original creation.

14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*? The LORD

hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans.

In language essentially like this, the Lord had summoned the heathen world to convene and defend the claims of their gods (chap. 41: 1, and 43: 9). Pertinent in this view is the question, Who among those heathen gods has ever predicted such things in the remote future? The allusion is to predictions of deliverance from Babylon.—“The Lord hath loved him;” *i. e.*, his people Israel, and therefore will do his own pleasure on Babylon, in just retribution.—Many interpreters refer “him” (“The Lord hath loved *him*”) to Cyrus. The pronoun stands here without any certain antecedent. The nature of the case favors its reference to Israel, he rather than Cyrus being an object of God’s love, and God’s love to him being a pertinent reason for inflicting his pleasure on Babylon; but the allusions to Cyrus in the next verse favor its reference to him.

15. I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

The word “I,” thrice repeated, makes God’s agency in calling forth Cyrus, trebly emphatic. The Lord first called him by name; then brought him forth in his providence, and gave him complete success.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Throughout the chapter thus far, God is the speaker, and indeed throughout the remaining verses of the chapter. The presumption is therefore too strong to be resisted that God must be the speaker in this verse. No critic questions this in respect to the first part of the verse. There are some however who maintain that the prophet is introduced as the speaker of the last clause; “And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.” But so violent a transition can not be justified unless on the ground of a stern necessity. In the present case no such necessity exists. For all the difficulties are at once obviated by the supposition that the distinction of persons in the Godhead appears in this verse, the real speaker being the Son of God, whose presence under the old dispensation as the revealing God is frequently recognized in the New Testament, and whose personality is distinctly brought to light in several passages of the Old Testament. He appears here as the author and fountain of prophecy; “I have not spoken in secret from the beginning.” Also as the God of

universal providence; "from the time that it was, there am I," *i. e.*, from the time that these prophecies respecting the restoration by means of Cyrus began to be fulfilled, I was there, actively energizing in providence to fulfill my purposes. Now I have a special mission to my people. "The Lord God hath sent me with his Spirit"—filling me with the Spirit and thus anointing and endowing me for my work.—This running paraphrase indicates my view of the sense of this passage. Points of so much importance should be developed more fully.—That the Son of God, the promised Messiah, is the author and fountain of prophecy, inspiring and directing the prophets of the ancient dispensation, follows naturally from the New Testament doctrine that he is "head over all things to the church." (Eph. 1: 22.) Being the divine regent who rules this world for the interests of his spiritual kingdom, he must of course supervise and control all his servants employed in this kingdom of light and truth. He commissioned the prophets of the Old Testament no less distinctly than the apostles of the New. They were not only prophets of Christ, but prophets speaking *for* Christ—inspired and sent by him. It is therefore by no means marvelous that his personality in this regard should appear occasionally, even in the Old Testament, as, *e. g.*, in Isaiah 6: 8: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Who will go for *us*?"—Furthermore, that Jesus Christ is the God of universal providence is also taught plainly and abundantly in the New Testament. See Heb. 1: 3, which speaks of him as "upholding all things by the word of his power." Jesus himself said (Matt. 28: 18), "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." According to the apostles, he was publicly recognized in heaven as universal Lord upon his ascension; but this had special reference to his new relations to man by virtue of his human nature, and does not necessarily imply that the divine person, the Son of God, was clothed with any powers after his ascension which he had not exercised from the foundation of the world. After his ascension he appeared in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain (Rev. 5: 6), but he was the God of universal providence before his ascension no less than after.—The doctrine of the last clause, "*The Lord God hath sent me with his Spirit*," is also taught elsewhere most fully. The Son sent by the Father, is indeed the current usual form of statement in the Scriptures. See Ex. 23: 20. Isaiah 61: 1. Mal. 3: 1. John 3: 34, and 7: 16, and 17: 18, and 20: 21. That he was richly endowed with the Spirit, sent *with* the Spirit in the sense of being *filled* therewith, is taught both in prophecy and in history. See notes on Isaiah 11: 2, and 61: 1.—These remarks and references may suffice to show that the sense brought out by the construction here proposed is amply confirmed in the Scriptures.—Now as

to the grammatical construction. In the first place, as already shown, the connection demands that the speaker in the last clause should be the same who speaks in the first part of the verse and certainly *he* is a divine person. This identical phrase, "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning," occurs in chap. 45 : 19.—Further, the construction above presented gives the obvious, natural sense of the words and follows their order and arrangement perfectly ; " And now the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit." Precisely so the words stand in the original. The last words, " And his Spirit," may *possibly* be the subject of the verb, joined with the Lord God as sending me (the speaker) ; but the location of the words does not favor it. And the current representation of the Scriptures is not that the Spirit sends the Son, but rather that he is sent *by* the Son, especially after Christ's ascension. That he is sent *with, upon, and in* the Son, is amply shown.—In Hebrew nouns as in English there are no special forms to distinguish the case, and show whether it is the subject or the object of the verb. Hence the form is ambiguous, and can not be of itself decisive. The Septuagint version has *pneuma* for Spirit, which also is ambiguous. The Vulgate makes it the subject, which the English version follows by placing it before the verb. Commentators and versions are in no harmony on this and other points of the passage. There are no grammatical conditions by which the construction can be determined absolutely. It is therefore most wise and safe to adopt the construction which is most obvious, natural and easy, provided also that the sense which it brings out is true, and yet more especially, if it be a leading truth, fully taught and made prominent in the Scriptures. All these conditions are met in the construction above, and therefore give it the preference greatly over any and all others.

17. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; *I am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

All unlike the profitless and even positively mischievous and ruinous teachings of idolatry, God had always taught Israel what was profitable, adapted to secure his highest good. The Lord obviously alludes by contrast to the teachings of the idol system as above, chaps. 44 : 10, and 45 : 19.

18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

God had taught them well, pointing out evermore the way

of life and blessedness. O! had they only hearkened and obeyed! The language expresses the strongest desire for this, and most clearly implies God's care and love for his people. If Israel had honestly obeyed, then had her peace, in the sense of prosperity and happiness, been as a river. "Righteousness" is integrity and virtue, such as lay the only sure foundation for happiness.—"Peace as a river" is fresh, abundant, never failing. Compared to the waves of the sea, it has the further qualities of depth and vastness. O the treasure for any human soul in such peace from God! How truly does it "pass all understanding!"

19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

In the second clause most modern critics prefer to read, "And the offspring of *thy* bowels like that of *its* bowels," i. e., like the offspring of the sea, the fishes whose fecundity is enormous, far surpassing any other animal races. The sense of the English version is also very strong, comparing their offspring to the sands of the sea shore.—The last clause I take to mean that their *name* in the sense of honor and renown should have stood fair and untarnished before God forever.—Such blessings would have been the unfailing lot of Israel if they had been true to their God and honestly obedient to his commandments.

20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

21. And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

The connection of thought here seems to be this: Though my people have been very guilty, and though they have taxed my long-suffering exceedingly, yet my mercies are even greater than their sins, and I shall therefore redeem them from their captivity in Babylon, and by parity of reasoning achieve for them other deliverances equal or greater. Therefore, "go ye forth from Babylon"—the command to do being with Isaiah a frequent form of predicting what they *will* do.—The allusions to waters in the desert are historical, referring to the miraculous supply of water to Israel in the wilderness. See Ex. 17: 6. Num. 20: 11. Ps. 78: 15, and 105: 15. The sense seems to

be, Such things God will do for his people when they are in such need. As he supplied waters from the rock in the deserts of Arabia, so will he in every other desert, of like want. —It can not be inferred that the Lord supplied water in precisely this way for the exiles returning from Babylon. We do not even know that they needed any miraculous supply. But the things they did need, the Lord promised and predicted that he would give. This promise is good through all time and for all his needy, trusting people.

22. *There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.*

God will do good both surely and abundantly to all those who humbly and obediently seek him; but *there shall be no peace to the wicked*. The peace pledged to his dutiful people will be broad, deep, placid, refreshing, unfailing as a river; but the wicked shall have not a rill, not one draught or even a drop, but absolutely *none at all!* So saith my God, no peace to the wicked for evermore! —O that wicked men would believe this, and cease to be wicked! How desolate to have *no peace, at all, forever!*



## CHAPTER XLIX.

By general consent of all evangelical commentators, this chapter treats of the Messiah, of the gospel age, and of the wide diffusion of pure Christianity far abroad to the ends of the earth. It deserves to be cherished in the affections of God's people, not only for the vastness of the blessings herein promised, and the clearness with which they are revealed; but also even more for the tender sympathy which is manifested on the part of God in the trials and the weaknesses of his people and for the wondrous words of comfort and assurance given most kindly of God to sustain faith and inspire expectation. —It corresponds remarkably with chap. 42 in this special feature, that Christ and his people are thought of as in some respects one party, doing a common work, under common trials, and almost constituting one compound person. It is due to the force of this conception that in v. 3, the Messiah is spoken of plainly under the name "Israel." —The reader will find it profitable to study this chapter in close connection with chap. 48: 16. There we saw the divine personality of the Messiah as the Son of God remarkably brought out. He appears there as the Inspirer of his servants the prophets ("I have not spoken in secret from the beginning"); as the God of universal providence ("from the

time these events began to develop themselves, I was there"); and then finally as the Great Apostle of a new and more marvelous mission, as one sent of God with the Spirit on some additional and most exalted service. It cannot be reasonably doubted that this new mission is the great work of the gospel age, and especially (as presented clearly in this chapter), the work of sending abroad the knowledge and the power of the gospel to the Gentile nations, and bringing them home to his own Zion. As that verse affirms this new mission, so this chapter takes up that subject; reaffirms the Messiah's call to it; throws light upon its nature; intimates some of its discouraging features and their first impression upon the Messiah and his people; yet shows wonderfully how God meets and removes those apprehensions and crowns all with the largest promises of success, and the most cheering intimations of joy and blessedness both to the new born nations and to the mother church which receives them to her warm bosom with overflowing soul.

1. Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from afar; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

The "Isles," summoned to listen should be taken here, as in chap. 41: 1, for the remote regions of the earth, especially those maritime countries lying beyond the waters of the Mediterranean. "Ye people," corresponding to the inhabitants of the isles, are all the remote nations. They are invited to give attention "from afar" to what the Messiah is about to say of this wonderful mission.—"The Lord hath called me from the womb," giving his name "*Jesus*," "Son of God" even before his birth (see Matt. 1: 20, 21, and Luke 1: 35), thus precisely fulfilling this prediction even in its most specific sense. He was also "*called*" in the sense of receiving his mission and of having his work foreshown by his prophets, long before he appeared in human flesh.

2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

"His *mouth* a sharp sword," means the *words* of his mouth, cutting because they pierce guilty souls, revealing sin and slaying vain hopes. So the writer to the Hebrews speaks of "the word of God as sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit . . . . and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4: 12).—As cases of the same conception in heathen writers, Bishop Lowth refers to Pindar's frequent description of his verses as darts, but especially to the famous panegyric of Eupolis on Pericles "that he alone of the orators left a sting in those who heard him."—It is pertinent



that the power of Jesus' words should be made prominent here because they were so in his history, it being testified of him, "Never man spake like this man." He himself accounts his kingdom to be essentially the reign of truth. He explains his work as King, saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." John 18: 37. Giving like prominence to his functions as a Teacher of truth he is called "the Word" (John 1: 1.)—In the last clause the figure changes from the sword to an arrow, the sense of the word rendered "shaft" being strictly the metal point of the arrow, that which pierced and did the execution. Its being hid in the shadow of God's hand and in his quiver, intimates that Christ's arrows of truth were kept back in comparative obscurity until he came in human flesh and were then brought forth and hurled with telling effect. To a great extent, the special truths of the gospel were kept in the quiver of the Almighty till in the fullness of time they might go forth from the Savior's own lips.

3. And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

The name "Israel," applied here to the personage who speaks, "me," has caused commentators great perplexity. Some have expunged the word as an error, yet without authority and with no reason save the difficulty they found in explaining it on their hypothesis. Some think the person to be the prophet Isaiah; others, Israel as a nation, or as the true church.—No one of these theories meets the exigences of the case. All that precedes and all that follows, direct our minds so manifestly and forcibly to Jesus the Messiah, that all other interpretations of this term except that which applies it to him, must be rejected.—As reasons for applying this term to Christ, it may be said, he was of the seed of Israel in his human relations, and the context looks specially to his earthly life and to his human relations to his own national people. Again, he fulfilled in himself the etymological significance of the name Israel—a prince having power with God. He was pre-eminently *an Israel*—one whom God "always heard"—one "who ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7: 25). But more than all else, probably, is the fact that in Christ's great work as king in the realm of truth, he was most closely related to his people. They were "laborers together with him." He and they together; he, the head, and they the members; he the first great Apostle sent of God, yet himself sending them even as the Father had sent him; one in sympathy and one in effort, contemplated with special reference to the evangelization of the world they both properly constituted one party in opposition to all the powers of darkness and sin; *i. e.*, they were one complex "*Israel*." In chap. 42: 1, 19, they were both designated as "my servant." To that chapter and to this use of the phrase "my servant," this passage



may tacitly allude, and this may account for his taking the name "Israel."—The last words of the verse would better express the original if read, "in whom I will glorify myself." Christ as the great Revealer of God shed peculiar and transcendent glory upon his character especially as a *God of love*—love at once great, pure, deep, exhaustless. The reader will readily recall that wonderful prayer of Christ, recorded John 17, as exemplifying the interest and joy which he felt in this grand truth, that the Father had been glorified in the Son, and was yet to be much more.

4. Then I said I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: *yet* surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

In the last clause "my work" should be explained as in chap. 40: 10, to mean, "the *reward* or *fruit* of my work—the sense being, I leave it with God to say *how much* and *when*.—"My judgment," or as it might be read, "my right"—what is due me—may be construed in the same general sense of reward.—It may now be fitly inquired, To what period does this verse refer? *When* was it that the Messiah, or if not the Messiah alone, yet the Messiah jointly with his people, are supposed to say these words?—My view is, during his earthly life, and with reference specially to the small apparent results of the work done for God in the ages before his birth; and in part it may be to his own limited success among his countrymen. If "Israel" includes with Jesus his first disciples also, then these shadings of discouragement may in part express *their* spirit. Or may it perhaps be supposed that the human nature of Christ speaks here, and that in the natural workings of what was merely human in him, he too sometimes looked on the merely human side of things, and viewed them as seen with the mortal eye? It behooves us to tread reverently over this ground, yet we have here what appears to be a tone of discouragement, chastened indeed by a sweet spirit of submission and of confidence in God. May it not come under the general law; "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin?" (Heb. 4: 15.)—We shall soon see with what kindness the Lord responded.

5. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

This verse is a parenthesis between the words, "And now saith the Lord," and v. 6, which commences the statement of what he said. This "bringing Jacob again to him" must refer to their spiritual conversion; not to their restoration from Babylon to Palestine. The latter would be foreign from the scope of the context.

—This clause suffices to show that the “servant” spoken of here is not Isaiah, nor the prophets as a body, nor Israel as a people, but is the Messiah himself. He pre-eminently was commissioned of God to reclaim apostate Israel. Consequently he made this the prime object of his labors while on earth.—The clause, “Though Israel be not gathered,” involves a critical question of no small difficulty, turning upon the single point whether the word for “*not*” should be rendered “*not*” or *to him*.” [In Hebrew the choice is between “not;” and “to him.”] The Hebrew Bible gives the former reading in the text, and the latter in the margin; as do our English Bibles also.—In favor of the text are (1.) The fact of its being the more difficult reading—one by no means likely to be introduced by any copyist, if it did not belong there. (2.) That it stands *before* the verb—the natural place for the negative, but not the most natural place for the other reading, “to him.” (3.) That the preposition for “to him” is not the same as in the clause, “bring Jacob again *to him*,” immediately before. If the sentiment had been precisely the same, it is somewhat probable that the preposition would have been the same. Yet parallel clauses sometimes vary the form of expression. In favor of the marginal reading, the strong point is, its harmony with the context, which has just said, “to restore Jacob to him,” and which in the next verse repeats the thought under the names of both Jacob and Israel, that the Messiah shall both “raise up” the one and “restore” the other. The course of remark therefore strongly favors the sentiment that Israel is to be gathered, and not that it should *fail* of being gathered to Christ.—The reader will readily recall the historical fact that, when Christ came and also subsequently, a large portion of the nominal Israel were cut off in their unbelief; and also the further fact of prophecy that they are ultimately to be gathered in, as Paul has said Rom. 11. So that each of these readings gives a phase corresponding to one or the other phase of their then future history. But the point of my present argument is that an allusion to their being cut off in great numbers (as by Titus) does not seem to be in harmony with the drift of the context.—The English reader will naturally inquire whether the adversative particles corresponding to “although” and “yet,” will not settle the question. Unfortunately the Hebrew language is remarkably indefinite in this regard. The original words are both the same, the word commonly meaning *and*, thus; “*And* Israel shall be gathered to him, *and* I shall be honored in the eyes of Jehovah,” etc. This “and,” sometimes means *yet*, but this must always be determined solely by the context. The word itself determines nothing absolutely.—The considerations in favor of these respective readings are quite evenly balanced. If the textual reading be adopted, the clause refers to the temporary failure to gather Israel because of their unbelief, the

Messiah yet comforting himself with the assurance that even so he would still do a glorious work in the eye of God, and Jehovah would be his strength, *i. e.*, of heart and hope for other labors.—If the marginal reading be accepted, the course of thought runs; The eternal Father formed me from the womb to be his servant, to restore Jacob to him and Israel shall truly *be gathered to him*, and I shall be honored in the eyes of the Lord (for this great achievement) “and my God shall be my strength”—the ground of all my success.

6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

In the first clause, the peculiar Hebrew idiom forbids a literal translation into English. Its real meaning, however, is plain. It is *too small a thing* that thou shouldst be my servant to restore Jacob and Israel (so much and no more would be too insignificant); I will also make thee a light to the Gentiles and my salvation to the ends of the earth. It would be too little to save Israel only; I will make thee the Savior of all the Gentiles as well.—“Be my salvation,” means; be for me, the author of salvation to all the Gentile world.—The reader will notice how strongly this verse implies that Jacob and Israel, whether the terms are strictly parallel or not, are both thought of as *saved* by the Messiah. The “tribes of Jacob” and “the preserved of Israel” must be essentially parallel, the latter phrase implying that some had been lost and only a part “preserved,” to be ultimately blessed with salvation.—The use of this passage by Paul (Acts 13: 47) shows that he was not surprised at the unbelief and ruin of some of the Jews, and that he found his work and joy in turning to the Gentiles. The point of most value, however, in this quotation is the light it throws upon the mutual relations of Christ and his apostles in this great work of saving men: “For so hath the Lord commanded *us*, saying, I have set thee (Jesus) to be a light of the Gentiles,” etc. What God had said to Jesus, Paul accounted as a command for himself and his brethren. They were not acting for themselves, but altogether for him, their Lord and Employer.

7. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

The one great idea in this passage (vs. 7-12) is that Christ shall bear to the Gentile world the knowledge and the power of salvation. This verse opens with the low esteem in which the Messiah had been held among the Gentiles, and the wondrous change that should ensue when the Lord should fulfill this prediction and make him the light and the glory of all the nations. The course of thought is essentially the same as in chapters 52: 13-15, and 53 and 54—the low estate and the great humiliation and suffering of his earthly life and death being made more prominent, however, in the latter passage.—The clause rendered, “To him whom man despiseth,” is literally, “To one despised of soul,” which I take to mean, to one *heartily despised*.—The next clause is literally, “To him who excites the abhorrence of the nations;” *i. e.*, who occasions or receives their abhorrence, not, who deserves it, or does anything that could legitimately call it forth. The English version gives the ultimate sense, though not the precise form of the expression.—The word used here for “nation” commonly denotes the Gentiles. The expressions give the state of mind toward the Messiah among the heathen, and with all unbelievers.—God saith this to him who has been esteemed “a servant of rulers,” though soon to be the Ruler of all rulers and King of all kings. The promise of exaltation and glory follows this brief sketch of his humiliation and disesteem. “Kings shall see” [the change that comes over the once humbled, but now glorious Messiah], and they shall rise up to do him honor; princes also shall bow down before him [“worship”]; all because of Jehovah, ever faithful to fulfill his promises, as this name indicates; and “because the Holy One of Israel has truly chosen thee” for his servant and his Great King of all the earth.

8. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

“In an acceptable time,” means in a time of favor, a day of mercy, when the way is prepared for the exercise and the signal display of God’s loving kindness in the conversion of the heathen.—“For a covenant of the people,” *i. e.*, of the Gentile nations; here as in chapter 42: 6.—“To establish the earth” is properly, to *raise up* the earth from its state of ruin under the reign of sin and the devil. To repair its desolations and cause them to be inhabited, fills out the description—its terms being taken from the division of Canaan by Joshua among the tribes. So under this picture the whole earth will become a

Canaan for the people of God, when the Gentiles shall have come into this relation.

9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

Figures accumulate to express the joyful change. The people are as prisoners coming forth from their prison-houses (see chapter 42: 7); as men long in darkness, now coming forth to the light of day. They are also as the flock of the shepherd, feeding securely along their paths. All high places become their pasture grounds.

10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

The flock are cared for by one who not only shields them from the fierce heats of the sun but controls the sun itself. And since, coupled with such power, there is also such tender loving-kindness and compassion, what harm can befall them? What more can they need? They are led along by living streams continually.—The word rendered “heat” is used (chapter 35: 7) for the “mirage.” If that be its sense here, it shuts off delusive hopes, and guarantees them solid good instead. But since it is coupled here with the sun, and both are said *not* to *smite* them, this can not be the “mirage.”

11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

By a change of figure they are now a moving army or an oriental caravan, and over all Jehovah's mountains a noble highway is built for their safe and delightful pilgrimage to the heavenly city.

12. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

And now the calling of the Gentiles and their conversion to God appear under the idea of a vast convocation, their moving hosts converging from every part of the wide world to meet in the Zion of the living God for his worship.—“Behold,” see those gathering millions! These come from afar; those from the north and those from the west; those others from the land

of Sinim.—It can scarcely be doubted that the prophet represents them as gathering from the four cardinal points of the heavens. The usage of the word for “north” is unquestioned. The word for “west” is *sea*, which is commonly used for the *west* because the great sea lay in that direction from Palestine.—The question : Where and what was Sinim? has been very elaborately discussed. Within the last few years the learned men of the age have become nearly unanimous in the opinion that “Sinim” is *China*. Not only commentators but comparative philologists who investigate the question for its bearings upon the earliest history of nations and of their languages have concurred with remarkable unanimity in this opinion.—China was known under this name (“Sinim”) to the Syrians and Arabians, and hence doubtless to the Jews and to other inhabitants of Western Asia. The name has long been known to the Chinese, yet it has not been in common use by themselves in their own country. That China was known to the people of Western Asia at a very remote period has been shown by the recent discovery of porcelain vessels with Chinese inscriptions among the monuments of Thebes.—In this word “Sinim,” the syllable “im” is the plural termination; Sin, being the radical word. The name, in this and kindred forms, *e. g.*, Tsin, Chin, Jin, has been for ages associated with that vast eastern empire. Alexander sums up thus the evidence that Sinim here means China. “An hypothesis which solves all difficulties, satisfies the claims of philology and history, unites the suffrages of the most independent schools and parties, fully meets the requisitions of the text and context, and opens a glorious field of expectation and effort to the church, may be safely regarded as the true one.”—This name “Sinim,” is naturally put in our text for the great eastern world, being doubtless the most eastern people known to the Jews. It is certainly remarkable that the finger of prophecy should drop precisely upon this immensely populous nation, designating them to represent the mighty east from which teeming hosts should come up to the standard of King Messiah.—If we assume that this passage gives the four cardinal points, we must assign the first, “These from afar,” to the south, and mainly to Africa. The south in Asia was not *afar*. But the Jews were familiar with Egypt; somewhat less so with Ethiopia, yet the notices of that land in their writings indicate a general knowledge of it. The land “afar” in the distant south embraced this vast country (we must suppose) and the regions beyond, with those also that lay west of Egypt. From this vast continent Gentile converts will come, therefore, to people the ideal Zion of the Lord. In plain gospel language, they will be converted to the living God, and will welcome and adore Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior.

The gospel has not yet fulfilled the mission here predicted for it, in China and Africa. With most entire confidence the reader of prophecy may put his finger on this verse as on those which promise a reign of universal peace and love, and say, Here are things that have never yet been; therefore they remain to be fulfilled.

13. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

These great thoughts enkindle the soul of the prophet (why should they not?) and he calls upon the heavens to sing and upon the earth to be full of joy; yea, upon the mountains to break forth in the swelling chorus—the mighty Andes and the Hymalaya pouring out their deep eternal bass, and all the lesser hills swelling the grand orchestra—so that it shall really seem that all nature pours out its soul in song, to praise God for the comfort he has given his people and the mercy he will show yet more to his afflicted. After they have waited so long, prayed and wept for ages in long tried hope but with still struggling yet never dying faith, it is and will be a consolation inexpressible to see such a day break forth on her darkness and such a consummation crown her days of toil and trial.—If any of us live to see these full results accomplished, shall we not join this song, and swell this chorus of mountains, earth, and skies?—Not one of these good words can fail. The chorus is yet to be performed, and there will be glad hearts to fill it and to magnify the grace of God together!

14. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.

With exquisite beauty and great force, the prophet turns back from this outburst of joy to note how Zion had felt and spoken during that long night of God's delay and of her sore trial. Then she had said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Everything looked like this, and under the pressure of great temptation, she had given way to such thoughts, and a hasty utterance to such words.—The verb "said" should rather be, *had said*, for it can scarcely be supposed that the prophet would represent the church as saying this in response to the exceeding great and precious promises which appear in the preceding verses. It was *previous* to this, before this light of gracious promise fell on her darkness, that she had indulged in this tone of despondency.—The Lord recalls those desponding words now for the sake of introducing the inimitable reply to them which follows.



15. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

What could be more beautiful, more pertinent, more assuring to weak faith, and more glorious considered as God's testimony to his own unfailing love for his people?—Can a mother's love forget and forsake her own offspring? Yea, such as they may possibly, supposably, forget their little ones; but God never can forget his sons and daughters.—The original makes the contrast strong and emphatic; can a mother *so* forget her nursing child as not to have compassion on the son of her womb? He puts this relationship in its strongest light, and then subjoins; yea, even mothers, tender-hearted mothers, despite of these maternal instincts, will sometimes forget; but God, his children, *never*.

16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

Names are sometimes written into human flesh, *e. g.*, slave-masters have written their own names into the flesh of their slaves. For a totally different purpose one might write the name of a dear friend on his own palms so that it might stand ever before him as a memorial. Such is the sense of this passage. God represents himself as having written the name of Zion upon the palms of his hands, engraving it there indelibly.—Conceiving of her as a city, her walls are ever present to his view. His eye is on her forever. This is his reply to what Zion had said above; "My Lord hath forgotten me." O how untrue to fact was this utterance of unbelief and how cruel in its bearings upon God in view of his enduring love and faithfulness!

17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

Thy wasters go: thy children come. This is the antithesis of the verse. Thy children hasten home. Thy enemies who have been tearing down thy walls and laying waste thy cities shall hasten far away.

18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, *and* come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them *on thee*, as a bride *doeth*.

This expands the thought of the first clause of v. 17, the hastening home of her children.—Lift up thine eyes and look



all round on every side; see all these coming in from every quarter. Then with the solemnity of his oath, the Lord declares; All these shall be thy ornament and thy glory, to be worn on thy person as the bride wears her ornaments. The figure suggests that the church is herself the bride, the Lamb's wife, now appearing in her queenly attire. See Ps. 45 : 8-17.

19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

In full accordance with the ancient theocratic state, Zion is a city with its surrounding country; but now under this great accession of her returning children, she is all too narrow for such a population. The sense is fairly put in the English version; yet the Hebrew exhibits that peculiar broken construction which very commonly results from strong feeling, thus; "For thy wastes and thy desolations, and the land of thy wasteness—for now thou wilt be too much straitened for the inhabitants."—Her enemies who once swallowed her up—the same referred to in v. 17—are now far away.

20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

With nearly the same general sense as in the English version, the Hebrew has it, "Again and again" [often and continually], "the children of thy bereaved state" (*i. e.*, who come home to thee in thy state of bereavement) "shall say" (to one another in thy hearing); "The place is strait for me; give place for me that I may dwell." They do not say this to their mother as a complaint. She overhears this talk among them, extorted by the straitness.

21. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had* they been?

This is the joyful surprise of the mother, seeing throngs of happy children who seem indeed to be her own, and yet she can scarcely imagine how they can be. She is saying in her heart (what it might not be altogether delicate to express), Who hath begotten for me these children? I was bereaved of my chil-

dren ; I was barren, a captive and a wanderer ; surely I never expected again to be the happy mother of children, and certainly not, of so many ! Who reared up all these ? Behold, I was left alone, solitary, childless : all these, where were they ? and whence do they come ?—The next verse gives the answer.

22. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people : and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

Lifting the hand and raising the signal (a flag or banner) both appear in chap. 13 : 2, as symbols of God's call to convene the nations to do a special work for himself ; there to assemble for the destruction of Babylon ; here to bring back to Zion her children converted to her, and in this sense, born for her in distant heathen lands.—In a sense quite analogous to our text, the Messianic passage (11 : 10) has it, "There shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand as a banner or flag for the nations." The sense here is that God will appropriate to his own special uses, the energies of the heathen, and make them bring home to Zion the thronging crowds of her converted sons and daughters.—The last clause represents them as bearing their burden upon the arm and bosom as little children are borne. "Shoulder" has nearly the sense of *back*, the place for fitting heavy burdens to one's person. The word suggests the palanquins of India.

23. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers : they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet ; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD : for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

"Nursing fathers" is less exact than foster fathers, the word signifying those who bore children in their arms.—Bowing *face-wise* (Hebrew) down to the very earth, must denote most humble submission and profound respect. "Licking the dust of thy feet" is yet stronger in the direction of subjugation, intimating that they were vanquished enemies now rendering most humble service. See the same phrase (Ps. 72 : 9) ; "His enemies shall lick the dust ;" and also Mic. 7 : 17.—Kings and queens, the highest earthly powers, shall become the real and the very humble servants of King Messiah. No longer as before arrayed against him, they now do any service however menial, for the glorious King of Zion.—Those who wait upon God are never put to shame, but, as this verse shows, shall be brought to the highest honor. The mighty kings of the earth

licking dust from their feet has a very different look from putting them to shame.

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

The course of thought turns here as it did in v. 14. Zion appears, saying, Lord, how can these things be? What! Shall the prey be wrested away from the mighty? Can any beast of the field pluck a lamb from the paw of the lion? Will the devil, "mighty" as he is, ever relinquish his hold upon his victims and allow them to be converted and torn from his grasp?—So the last clause, Shall the captives of a righteous one be delivered up? The righteous conqueror may mean one who has made his captives according to the laws of honorable warfare; and the point may be that though the captives taken by a cruel oppressor might, in the retributions of God's providence, be wrested from his grasp, yet who would expect this of captives taken fairly and according to the laws of war as imposed by civilized nations?—Zion seems to assume that Satan holds the kingdoms of this world by right of possession, and wonders whether he can be ousted! The Lord answers:

25. But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

Yes; even the strong case put in the question only serves to illustrate the glory of that power which stands for the help and victory of Zion. When God undertakes, even the captives of the mighty conquerors are rescued from their grasp. Satan holds this world in his chains no longer. God himself enters the lists to give battle against those that war against Zion. He will save her children.

26. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

The persistent foes of the church and of her Messiah must meet this fearful doom—to eat their own flesh and be drunken with their own blood as men who drink sweet wine. These figures bear upon their face their general significance. Who can say in what specific form these inflictions shall fall?—Let these words suffice to show the people of God that their Re-

deemer is mighty ; that he will plead and maintain their cause since it is also his own cause ; and that he will make a fearful example of his incorrigible and persistent enemies. And so also let these words suffice to show the wicked that they can never stand against the mighty God ; that, persisting in this madness, they have to expect only a doom unutterably awful ! Why will they persist in self-ruin ? Why should they choose madness and death ?——All flesh shall know the truth of what God has often said to his people, that He is their faithful and omnipotent Savior and Redeemer.



## CHAPTER L.

A PROPHETIC discourse which has for its main purpose to present the mutual relations between God and his people, must from time to time turn from gospel promise to stern rebuke. The people who have represented God's cause on earth have often been wayward ; sometimes fearfully apostate. Hence their case has sometimes demanded of him not chastisement only but expulsion from his house and home. For the best moral results it is vital that the moral grounds of such expulsion should be clearly set before them. Hence the statements in the first three verses of this chapter.—Vs. 4-9 manifestly describe the earthly life and labors of the Messiah—this life having been lived and these labors expended among the nominal people of God in precisely one of those seasons when they were about to be divorced from their nation's Sovereign, their divine Maker and Husband. In this fact we see the point of logical connection between this portion (vs. 4-9), and the former (1-3). Then v. 10 applies this example of Christ for the instruction of those who truly feared the Lord ; and v. 11, to the warning of those who discard such instruction and persist in self-reliance instead. These remarks will suggest the logical connection which links together the various portions of this chapter.

1. Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Several of the prophets, *e. g.*, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea, give great prominence to the marriage covenant in illustrating

the relations between God and his ancient people. This reference to the "bill of divorcement" rests on the same conception. The Mosaic law (see Deut. 24 : 1-4) made special provision in cases of divorce for a written instrument, assigning the reasons or causes of the separation.—The second clause, "To which of my creditors have I sold you?" looks in like manner to another usage, under not precisely the Mosaic law, but rather the common law of custom whereby in bad cases of debt or of a severe creditor, the debtor sold himself to satisfy the claim. See Lev. 25 : 39-43, 47-55.—Alluding to these existing usages as figures to illustrate the case in point, the Lord asks, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? Produce it and see what the assigned reasons are. So also, To whom have I sold you? Let the reasons of this transaction be inquired into.—The expression, "Your mother," is addressed to the children, but assumes this form in order to correspond with the figure. The idea would have been expressed truly if the mother herself, the Jewish church, had been addressed; Why were *you* divorced?—The Lord then gives the reason, this being the main purpose for which these figures were introduced; "For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves into bondage" [exclusion from God]; for your transgressions has your mother, the Jewish nation, been cut off from being my nominal people.

2. Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water, and dieth for thirst.

3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

The Hebrew idiom has it, Wherefore did I come and there was no man? Yet the point of the question is *not* to ask why the Lord came, but why, *when he came* to his people, there was none to meet him, none to greet him? Why, when he came home as a husband to his household, was there no loving wife to greet his return? Why was it that when he spake, there was none to answer, and that not even his wife would reply a word to his call? This indicates a sad state of things on the part of the wife toward her husband.—The Lord still pushes the question, Why this heartless repulsion? Is it because I have shown myself powerless to help? Is it that my promised help has failed in the time of need, and my presence therefore is more a nuisance than a blessing? "Behold at my rebuke, I dry up the sea;" I dried up the Red Sea to let my people pass safely over, and can do other like things on any emergency. All the elements of nature are at my

command. I can shroud the heavens in black, the livery of mourning. Would not such a Friend and Helper be worthy of esteem and confidence?

4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

The speaker, the person represented by "me" and "mine" throughout the remaining verses of this chapter, I take to be the Messiah, speaking with reference especially to his earthly life. Every feature in the description applies to him fitly and not well to any other. The first three verses have also a manifest reference to the Jewish people at that time, so that this transition to the human experience of Jesus is not abrupt. Moreover, it was every way fitting that the example of Jesus should be applied to the spiritual instruction of the docile among his visible people, and to the warning of the unteachable, as it is in verses 10, 11.—This v. 4 contemplates Jesus as himself a learner, a disciple in the knowledge of God, learning himself that he might teach others, and especially those weary, heavy laden souls who needed precisely such truths to give them rest.—As a teacher would waken the ears of his pupils each morning for a new lesson, so did his God teach him.—The last words would be slightly better if read, "as scholars" [or learners] "hear."—The recurrence of the divine name—"the Lord God," throughout this passage, is peculiar. Note it in vs. 4, 5, 7, 9. The object seems to be to indicate the relation of Jesus to the Father with special reference to his own human nature. Considered as man, a brother of our race, the Lord God taught him; opened his ear; became the object of his constant trust for help.

5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

The Lord called for his mental attention; he cheerfully gave it. He was never refractory, never resisted those heavenly impulses which prompted him to receive truth and knowledge from God.

6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Jesus submitted to insult and abuse. Scourging is specially named (Mark 15: 15); smiting with the hand (Matt. 26: 67. John 19: 3); spitting in the face (Matt. 26: 67, and 27: 30). Plucking off the hair of the cheek [the beard] was, in the view of the Orientals, the grossest insult.—These insults, heaped upon the

meek, the innocent and lovely Jesus by the very people he came to save; nay, more—by the professed people of God, and under the sanction of their religious leaders, became terribly significant of the measure of their apostasy and moral corruption. Surely it was time for a spiritual divorcement of this people from their covenant God!

7. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

The original does not demand and scarcely justifies the word "for," to introduce this verse. "And" is the usual sense; "but" or "yet" might be admissible.—The Savior endured this cruel insult and this contradiction of sinners against himself with the moral strength of a precious trust in his God to help him. In this confidence he set his face like a flint, unflinching, patiently enduring, never recoiling, or shrinking.

8. *He* is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

9. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

The terms in these verses are forensic, pertaining to judicial trials. Jesus had a personal experience under which this figure became fact. The figure leads the thought here: Who will arraign me before the judge? He who vindicates my cause [God] is near me. Who then will dare contend with me in litigation? Let us stand up before the court together [a challenge to join issue].—The original for "mine adversary" is well put in the English margin; Who is master of my cause? in the sense, Who will indict and compel my appearance in court to defend myself? Under the old Roman law, the plaintiff summoned the accused to appear and held him to answer. The sense here is, Who can command and compel my appearance as defendant? Who has any just ground of accusation against me?—All who attempt to condemn me will lose power as an old rotten garment has lost strength; "the moth shall eat them up"—a figure to illustrate the waning and vanishing of all their power to harm.

10. Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

This verse gives one side of the practical application of the Savior's experience, viz., that which pertains to the docile and

pious. The English verbs, "feareth" and "obeyeth," translate Hebrew participles, and are therefore in the present tense; who *is fearing* and *is obeying*, etc. But "walketh," translates a verb in the *past* tense; "who *has been* walking in darkness."—The sentiment of the verse is, If any one among you, really fearing the Lord and obeying the voice of his servant (the Messiah) *has been* walking in darkness analogous to that through which I have walked, under insult, scorn, contempt, persecution, arraignment before courts of law, and with no light shining on his pathway, let him trust as I have done in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.—Trusting in the *name* of God seems to involve the special idea of trust in God *as revealed* by his significant names and by the manifestations of himself made in his providence and grace.—"Walking in darkness," according to current Hebrew usage, is not walking under the frown of Jehovah or under the spiritual hidings of his face; but through scenes of outward calamity or affliction. See Isaiah 8: 20, and 9: 1.—The use of this passage to prove that God sometimes hides his face and leaves in spiritual darkness even those who are really at the time fearing and obeying him, is entirely unauthorized either by the current usage of the Hebrews as to walking in darkness, or by the nature of the case contemplated here—that of Jesus in his earthly life. For the reader will notice that the darkness under which the Messiah is here thought of as walking is ill-treatment from hostile Jews, and not the eclipse of God's presence in Gethsemane or on Calvary. To the latter, the passage (vs. 4–9) makes no allusion.—The assumption that God may sometimes, capriciously, without any reason known or knowable to us, withdraw the light of his countenance and the manifestations of his love from his people while they are walking in his fear and in true obedience, should not be made without substantial authority. No such authority can be found here.

11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass *yourselves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks *that* ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

"Kindling a fire" and "compassing one's self with sparks of his own kindling," look as figures to the case of one who walks in darkness, *i. e.*, through scenes of calamity and sore trial, but who instead of seeking light from God, goes about to strike up a rush-light of his own. Instead of asking God's sun to rise upon his darkness and God's good hand to brush the clouds away, he kindles a little fire and surrounds himself with a few sparks of his own—a miserably poor substitute at best for sunlight and especially such sunlight as God's! The end of such contempt of God, and such reliance on self can be nothing better or other than to "lie down in sorrow."—This warning fitly extends to all human



endeavors to get up schemes of salvation, *e. g.*, like those of the Jews, consisting in religious formalities, tithe-paying, anything other than accepting God and his scheme for saving men from sin and hell. Those who labor to strike up such false lights are only kindling the fires that must consume their guilty souls forever! God would remind them that he is himself their only Savior, and warns them that it is at their peril if they discard him, to save themselves in ways of their own.



CHAPTER LI.

THROUGHOUT this chapter the tone is hopeful and full of promise. Zion is indeed seen in her militant state, but is exhorted not to fear her foes, and is assured that the cup of divine chastisement is to pass from her lips to the lips of those who have been her oppressors.

1. Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.

2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

This address is specially to the pious portion of God's ancient Zion, designated as those who "follow after righteousness" and who "seek the Lord," *i. e.*, who make personal holiness their special object and aim, and whose supreme endeavor is to please God and thus find his presence and favor.—The expression, "follow after righteousness," appears first in the writings of Moses (Deut. 16: 22). "Justice, justice shalt thou follow that thou mayest live," etc. It is strongly commended in the writings of Solomon; "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness" (Prov. 15: 9). "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness and honor (Prov. 21: 21).—The same thought in the New Testament takes the form, "Be ye perfect." "Follow peace with all men and holiness," etc. "Follow after charity" [*i. e.*, *love*]. The central thought is, a state of sincere, earnest endeavor to *be* and *to do right*—to be like God and to obey him always and perfectly.—To encourage these truly Christian people, the Lord exhorts them to look to Abraham, their national progenitor, and note how, though he was one man when God called him out from his country and kindred, yet God made of him a great nation. So

the implication is, God will multiply *you*, the small but pious body of his true worshipers. That God blessed him with a great increase, is the special point made here, on which also the new promise turns.—The “rock” and the “hole of the pit” constitute but a single figure. It compares the Hebrew people to a stone cut from a quarry. Abraham was the old quarry from which all these stones were taken—the hole in the ground whence they were taken out.—In the things said of Abraham, observe that “called” means here, not to give him a name, or to state any features of his character, but to *select* and *call forth* for a special mission. And further, that the verbs “bless” and “increase” are both in the future tense, not affirming that God *had* blessed him with a numerous posterity, which fact was known full well—but that he *would still* bless him by multiplying his spiritual seed indefinitely more than he had multiplied his lineal offspring. The point of the promise turns largely on this future sense of the verbs, “*I will bless*” and *I will* increase him. It is specially unfortunate that the received translation should have ignored this future sense and promise.

3. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

That promise has already brought these blessings. “*For* the Lord has already begun to comfort Zion; “*has* comforted” is the Hebrew and not merely *shall* comfort. He *has* comforted her by these rich promises, and by preparing the way for their sure fulfillment. “And consequently” [so the Hebrew reads] “he makes her wilderness like Eden, that primitive garden where peace smiled all the day, and where beauty and verdure enjoyed their primal glory. The reference here to the garden of Eden is pertinent and rich. See Gen. 2: 8, and 13: 10, and Ezek. 31: 9. God will bring back that lovely garden, the symbol of purity and holiness, irradiated with his own divine presence. The gospel in its days of power will make this earth again like Eden. Joy and gladness shall *be found* in her, *i. e.*, shall not merely be there ideally, in the fancy of the poet, or in the imaginations or dreams of men; but in their actual experience—shall *be found* there in fact. There shall be also thanksgiving and the voice of song. Ah, truly; and why not, when divine mercy triumphs so gloriously over human sin and woe!

4. Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

5. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

Dr. Alexander remarks that this call for special attention, "Hearken unto me," as in vs. 1, 4, 7, assumes that a new class is addressed, each differing in at least some respects from those addressed before. Such seems to be its usage in these three cases; v. 1 addressing exclusively the pious—those who "follow after righteousness" and "seek the Lord;" v. 4, the entire people the whole nation who were by covenant the Lord's but among whom were many thousands who *had* bowed the knee to Baal; but again, v. 7, returning to the truly pious (ye that know righteousness), "the people in whose heart is my law."—Here the strain of address to the whole people is rich in promised blessings.—"Law" and "judgment" must be taken here in the same sense as in chapter 42: 1, 3, 4. They are said to "go forth from God and to "rest" in the sense of finding a firm foothold and a permanent standing for a light of the Gentile nations. True religion, founded in the revelation of the true God and in the knowledge of his will as to human conduct, will yet go abroad to bless the world.—"My righteousness," includes goodness and mercy to the obedient; calamity and retribution to the persistent rebel. It is *near* in the sense of being not dormant or remote, but on the eve of special activity, corresponding to "salvation" already gone forth."—The isles wait on God in the same sense as in chapter 42: 4.—Then, to impress a sense of his power and faithfulness to perform every promise, he says, Look up to the heavenly bodies, the sun and the stars. They will disintegrate and go up like smoke, sooner than one word of God's promise shall fail. Look to the earth: it will wax old as a garment, and its living populations will lose all their vital force and perish; but my salvation will perish never. These promises can never become old and effete so as to lose their vitality. My righteousness, pledged here in the sense of veracity, and ever energizing in the divine bosom, can never become weak—can never be broken down and destroyed. Thus the infinite God guaranties his promises to his people.—I take v. 6, not as a declaration that the heavens *shall* vanish and the earth become effete and lose all the vital forces of life, but as saying, These results will sooner be than my salvation become

inoperative and my righteousness abortive. The mode of statement is analogous to that in chapter 54 : 10: "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee." See also Jer. 31 : 35—37. "If the ordinances of the moon and the stars depart from before me, then shall the seed of Israel also cease from being a nation before me forever." It may be very true that the heavens will one day vanish away; but it does not seem pertinent to bring in the prediction of it *as a fact* in this connection. For it might fitly be asked, Even if so, what then? What has that fact to do with this strain of promise?

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

O all ye who truly love my law; be not afraid of the reproaches of men, for they shall perish; but God's righteousness and salvation shall endure forever.—Remarkably, the same Hebrew verb closes both v. 6 and v. 7 as if with a designed play on the word; thus: Since God's righteousness shall never be *broken down* ["abolished"], see that ye are not *broken down* [made afraid] by the revilings of the wicked.

9. Awake, awake; put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?

10. *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

The prophet speaking in behalf of Zion; "leading in prayer" we might say, for all Zion to join; invokes the arm [strength] of the Lord to awake and exert its power as in ancient days when it cut off Egypt's proud king and his chariots of war in the Red Sea. "Rahab" is another name for Egypt, applied to her for her pride. See its use in this sense Psalms 87 : 4, and 89 : 10. So also of the word, "The dragon," in like manner applied to Pharaoh, *e. g.*, Psalms 74 : 13, 14; and Ezek. 29 : 3, and 32 : 2. Egypt's king, slain in the Red Sea, is compared to the dragons or crocodiles of the Nile. The thought is, Let the same glorious arm which smote that dragon mortally, again

awaken its energies to redeem God's people. Let the deliverance wrought at the Red Sea be re-enacted for Zion.

11. Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

The logical connection with the verse preceding is full of force. Because God saved his ransomed ones at the Red Sea, "*therefore*" his redeemed (a word of like force) shall return and come with songs to Zion. Having the same God for their Redeemer and Savior, why should not the same result be confidently expected?—The words of this verse appear also in substance, chap. 35 : 10.

12. I, *even* I, *am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass;

13. And forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

"I," "I myself" and alone, repeated as usual for emphasis. The Lord speaks of himself as the comforter of Zion, he having not merely given her great promises but also wrought for her great works of power and mercy.—The Hebrew idiom, "Who art thou, and thou wast afraid" (the form of the original) means simply, Why then hast thou been afraid? It is not strictly, Why *shouldest* thou be afraid? although this is implied; but the question expresses an actual and culpable distrust of God. She *had been* afraid.—So also the verb in the next verse in the same construction; Why hast thou forgotten the Lord thy Maker who has shown himself mighty to spread out the heavens and plant the foundations of the earth; and why hast thou feared the oppressor?—In the clause, "Afraid of a man that shall die," the choice of a term for "man" out of three or four which the Hebrew language supplies, takes one that strongly implies frailty.—The clause respecting the oppressor, rendered, "as if he were ready to destroy," is more precisely, Why hast thou feared the fury of the oppressor *as he made ready* to destroy? i. e., at what time he was prepared to destroy thee. Why didst thou fear him—even then—old Pharaoh and his proud host? For where now is the fury of thine old oppressors? In the bottom of the sea! Think of *their* doom, and cease to fear the rage of thine enemies!

14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.

The first clause seems to mean strictly, He who is bowing under his chains hastens to be loosed. He shall not die in the pit: his bread shall not fail. His deliverance is sure. He shall not die in his under-ground prison, nor perish of starvation. The people of God, however extreme their bondage, are soon to be free.—This supposed bondage is probably ideal—a mere figure; may possibly be historical, *e. g.*, that in Egypt; least probable of all is the reference assumed by some to Babylon, which would make the allusion prophetic.

15. But I *am* the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.

The word rendered "divided" is now generally admitted to mean to terrify, to impress with sudden fear, and as a consequence, sometimes to hush into silence, but here in the case of the sea, to produce yet greater commotion.—The next clause is connected thus; and *then*, or *consequently*, the waves roared. The verse therefore means, I am the Lord thy God, who smote the [Red] Sea with consternation and then its waves surged and dashed and roared; first back, for my people to pass; and then with returning tides to whelm the hosts of Egypt deep beneath its angry billows.—With a similar figure Habakkuk says, "The deep uttered his voice [as with a scream of terror] and lifted up his hands on high."

16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people.

The person addressed here is primarily the Messiah, yet not excluding his people, who are one with him in bearing God's words to men.—The phrase, "put my words in thy mouth," occurs in chap. 59: 21.—"Covered thee in the shadow of mine hand," may be seen in chap. 49: 2, said there *to* and *of* the Messiah.—"Planting the heavens" and laying (*i. e.*, anew) "the foundations of the earth," introduce the figure which is expanded more fully in chaps. 65: 17, 18, and 66: 22. This introduction of the idea of making new heavens and new earth is valuable exegetically for its bearings on the great question whether these new heavens and earth are really physical, or

only spiritual.—Doubtless they should be construed here as in chaps. 65 and 66, and there as here. But here they must describe moral and spiritual changes, and not physical, for the parallel and explanatory clause has it, "And say unto Zion, thou art my people;" equivalent to *making* Zion my people by a new spiritual life. Then, moreover, the antecedent context and logical connection of the passage are equally decisive. The Lord God puts his words in the mouth of the Messiah and protects him in the shadow of his hand, not to the end that he may create a new planet, or re-create an old one, but *in order that* he may *do the great work of the gospel age*, accomplish his mission connected with his first (and not his second) advent, for to this beyond all question, the whole context refers. Compare also chap. 49: 2, where the same phrases occur, and in the same relations of thought—the Messiah anointed and protected for his earthly mission.—Some have supposed, perhaps truly, that the change indicated by the new heavens and the new earth" is that from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation. It very naturally comprises this, but includes also the great moral and spiritual changes embraced in the new phase of Christian life.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.

This verb, "*awake*," is the same which, in v. 9, is applied to the "arm of the Lord," but in this case in a form different from that and one which is often used for reciprocal action; *rouse up thyself*. In this form there may perhaps be a tacit rebuke implied which would be by no means appropriate when addressed to God.—The prophet conceives of the Lord's providential judgments upon wicked nations as an intoxicating, maddening cup, given them to drink. See Jer. 25: 15–29. The Jews drank deeply of this cup at various points in their national history, and especially during their long captivity in Babylon.—The word rendered "dregs" is now generally held to mean a cup or bowl, and compounded with the other word for cup as we might say, a "goblet-cup."—"Trembling" is reeling as if with intoxication. "Wrung out," is rather *sucked* out, drained to its last drop.

18. *There* is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is *there any* that taketh her by the hand of all the sons *that* she hath brought up.

The verbs rendered "guide," and "take by the hand," are

precisely those which are used pertinently to express what Christ does for his people, guiding them as a shepherd, his flock ; grasping their hand strongly to impart strength and powerfully sustain. The former is used in chap. 40 : 11, for the shepherd's leading his feeble ewes. The latter occurs in chap. 41 : 13.—But Zion has none among all her sons (other than the Messiah) to sustain and to lead her thus. Her priests and prophets are all too weak even if not all too wicked for her help in such need.—These manifest allusions to the spiritual work of Christ indicate the sort of evils out of which Zion is to be delivered—not physical but spiritual.

19. These two *things* are come unto thee ; who shall be sorry for thee ? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword : by whom shall I comfort thee ?

20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net : they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.

These two things have come upon or befallen thee ; who shall bemoan thee ? Who is there to sympathize with thy calamity ? What other nation ever cared for the affliction of the covenant people considered as the Lord's ?—Critics have found it difficult to make out the two things referred to where four are named. It is supposable that "famine" and the "sword" are not distinct from "desolation" and "destruction," but explanatory—"famine" explaining what he means by "desolation," and the "sword" what he means by "destruction."—The Hebrew of the last clause is quite peculiar, literally, "Who—I will comfort thee ?" Some expound it, Who [but] I will comfort thee ? Some ; Who ? I will comfort thee. Others ; Who am I that I should comfort thee ?—I take the sentiment to be, Who else can ; Yet I will comfort thee ; as if the speaker began to say, Who will or can comfort thee ? but without finishing, said, Who—I will give thee comfort.

21. Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine :

22. Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no more drink it again :

23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee ; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over : and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.



The Lord will transfer the cup of divine judgment from her hand to the hand of those who had horribly oppressed and abused her.—“Thy Lord, the Jehovah,” the name being chosen with an eye to its significance, *the ever faithful One*.—“Who have said to thy soul” means more than *said to thee*. It means, said to *thine heart*, said things that went to thy heart, cruelly afflictive.—These representations of God’s people as compelled to lie upon the ground for their enemies to tread upon and pass over their prostrate bodies, is exceedingly expressive. It is no doubt figurative here, yet history gives some cases of such actual treatment. Dr. Alexander cites the treatment of Valerian by Sapor; of her royal captives by Sesostriis as described by Diodorus; and of the Emperor Frederic by Pope Alexander III.—The ultimate sense I take to be that all the insult and abuse heaped upon the chosen people of God by their heathen foes shall yet pass over to those foes, the Lord giving to Zion glory in place of her former shame; making her the first and noblest and no more the least in honor and prestige among the powers of the earth.



## CHAPTER LII.

ZION, thought of as embodied in the Jewish nation, is exhorted to arouse herself and come up from her state of depression and degradation. The figures are brought forward from the close of the previous chapter, and conceive of her as having been enslaved and oppressed—the essential idea however being her previous low spiritual state and her consequent weakness and disgrace before the nations—to be now exchanged for a new spiritual life under the gospel dispensation. It was as if the nation had been abused for no good reason—sold, and no worthy price paid to the Lord who was their rightful owner. Therefore God would redeem them without money (vs. 3, 4). His name had been dishonored in their national sufferings; therefore he would vindicate it (vs. 5, 6). Joyous messengers announcing the Messiah’s advent, and the gospel age and reign, are hailed as coming (v. 7); Zion’s watchmen see them from the city watch-towers and greet them with songs of joy (v. 8). All the wastes of Zion are summoned to join in these songs, and rejoice in all the redemption God has wrought (vs. 9, 10); the transition from the old age and state of Zion to the new is thought of as a solemn march or procession, jointly military and

sacerdotal ; the church moving out with slow and solemn tread, joyfully reposing in her God who both leads her as the captain of her host and follows her as her rear-guard (vs. 11, 12).—And now “my servant,” the great Messiah, comes distinctly to view, dealing wisely and therefore exalted most signally (v. 13); his humiliation and his worn and wasted visage creating astonishment (v. 14); but correspondingly, many shall be blessed by his spiritual gifts; kings shall do him homage and be amazed at the new and precious truths which they learn from his lips, (v. 15).—It is of no small importance to note that the ground idea of this chapter is the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian economy, which of course involves the coming of the Messiah and a glorious advance in the spiritual life of Zion. To aid in the illustration of this idea, the prophet alludes to the relations of Israel to ancient Egypt, and to Assyria (v. 4); perhaps also to Babylon; but neither of these sets of historical relations is to be considered as the main subject of the chapter. —The reference to Egypt and to Assyria is of course historical and illustrative, and not at all prophetic; and whatever reference there may be to Babylon, it seems better to construe in substantially the same way, the prophet in vision already seeing this restoration as past or at least present, and therefore as a fact from which he may draw his phraseology and figures for describing the far more glorious redemption and restoration wrought in the Messiah’s coming. The passage in chap. 40: 1-11 is in this respect analogous.

1. Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

The first three verbs correspond to those in chap. 51: 9. As the prophet there, speaking for the people, invoked the arm of the Lord to arouse and gird itself with new strength, so here he calls on Zion in the same language to do the same thing. She has been sorely depressed with discouragement, prostrate and broken in spirit: now let her arouse herself, for her redemption draws nigh. The last clause assigns as a reason that she is henceforth to be far more pure, being exempt from the pernicious presence and influence of ungodly men. The church, no longer national and consequently encumbered with a mass of ungodly members, shall henceforth consist of those only who individually profess personal godliness. Besides, Christ will bring into her new light and life, and the effusions of the Spirit will open a new age of spiritual power.—The reader will notice that if the last clause “There shall no more come into thee the uncir-

cumcised and the unclean," be applied primarily to the restoration from Babylon, it is entirely too strong to correspond with the facts.

2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

The conception of Zion as covered with dust follows the thought in the close of the previous chapter where she lay on the ground, her enemies treading her into the very dust and soiling her garments. So also the "bands of her neck" assume that she has been a captive in bonds. "Daughter of Zion" is equivalent to Daughter, Zion—cities being poetically represented as females, and very often as daughters. See chap. 1: 8.

3. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

The nation, by covenant the Lord's people, had been sold into national bondage [See Judges 2: 14, and 3: 8 and 4: 2. Ps. 44: 12.] yet no worthy price paid, as was done in the customary purchase of slaves among heathen nations. Hence God would claim them back and pay nothing for their ransom.—The same figure of selling the nation appears in chaps. 50: 1, and 45: 13.—The passive form, *were sold*, is better than the reflexive, "sold yourselves," since the passage refers to *compulsory* servitude to other nations. The form of the Hebrew verb used here is commonly passive.

4. For thus saith the LORD GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

These are special cases under the general statements of the previous verse. Israel went down into Egypt for the innocent purpose of sojourning there a short time only, till the famine should be over. It was therefore a mere outrage on the part of Egypt's king to seize them and subject them to servile bondage. No price was paid to their divine owner for them. No regard was had to essential righteousness and justice. God might therefore fitly recover them with no money, but indeed at the cost to Egypt of her king and his whole army.—Equally without cause was their oppression under the Assyrian power, and with like terrible retribution upon his vast army did the Lord avenge and deliver his people.

5. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule

over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that *I am* he that doth speak: behold it is I.

These verses are obviously related on the one hand to the foregoing context (vs. 3, 4) as the Lord's reflections and inferences from those and similar facts; and on the other, to the following context as giving the solemn purpose of the Lord to change his course toward his people, retrieve his imperiled honor, and confound his triumphant foes. It also assumes the grounds or reasons for these new manifestations of his power and grace for Zion.—Looking back to the case of his people as sold into Egypt and as oppressed by the Assyrian, and thinking how much it inured to the reproach of his name before the heathen, considering also how those foreign relations debased the piety of his people and retarded his great work of human salvation; he seems here to pause for consideration and for a new resolve.—V. 5 may possibly have a somewhat special reference to a third case analogous to those of Egypt and Assyria, viz., the relations of his people to Babylon. Yet Babylon is not named, while both Egypt and Assyria are. The reference to Babylon therefore, if here at all, is here in a tacit form, a sort of underlying assumption, corresponding to its relations to the coming of Christ in Isaiah 40: 1-9. Hence the course of thought here may be put in general thus: Now therefore how can I afford to pursue this policy, imbosoming my church in a theocratic nation; this nation apostatizing so often and so sorely, bringing upon themselves national oppression and desolation, to the scandal of my name before all the nations, and to the frustration or at least the indefinite postponement of my purpose to give the knowledge and power of salvation to all people? I must not leave my name to such dishonor, must not leave my people to such apostasy and such chastisement under foreign oppressors. They must know my name as their own God, and must be brought up to a new and higher life of faith and holiness.—This view of the course of thought here assumes a direct reference to the subsequent context as revealing God's purpose to introduce the gospel dispensation, the coming of the Messiah, and those stupendous spiritual changes of Zion which indefinitely augmented her moral power over the nations.—“Taken away for nought,” means, taken into captivity, without compensation made to me, the figure of captives sold as slaves being still before the mind.—In the next clause, usage does not sustain the translation “make them to howl.” This form of this verb is used repeatedly in the sense of howling, making a loud outcry, but

not in the sense of being *made* to howl. The most approved construction gives it this sense:—Their oppressors, “they that rule over them,” shout or yell in exultant triumph. Consequently God’s name is dishonored. Men speak of it with blasphemous contempt.—V. 6 I paraphrase thus: Therefore, because I can not endure such things longer, my people shall know my faithfulness, power and grace [“my name”]; they shall surely know in that day when these coming events shall take place, that I am he who has said and is still saying, “*Behold me!*” They shall experience [“know”] the gloriously saving power of their own God who has so often called their attention and sought to inspire their faith by this expression, “Behold me!” —This construction of the last clause is plainly indicated by the accents and requires no new words to be supplied, *e. g.*, “it is,” as in the English version.—Under this construction of vs. 5, 6, the course of thought passes naturally to the announcement of the gospel age, as we shall see.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Two interpretations of this passage (vs. 7–12) have been held; one applying it primarily and specially to the restoration from Babylon; the other, to the change from the Mosaic to the gospel dispensation, including as its leading events the advent of the Messiah, the setting up of his kingdom, and the proclamation of the gospel.—I prefer the latter, (1.) Because of the connection of this passage with that which immediately follows (52: 13–15, and 53), where we have a very specific description of the great personage who is here represented as coming and reigning, and as leading his people forth into a new spiritual world of life and labor, this personage being surely the Messiah and none other. (2.) Because of the close analogy of this passage with chap. 40: 1–11, which manifestly refers to this great transition from the Mosaic to the Christian age, coupled with the coming of Christ. (3.) Because the entire passage admits of a natural, easy and forcible construction on this hypothesis; while on the other, the language and figures are entirely overdone, meaning much more than the historic events will bear. This will be seen more fully upon careful examination.—But if the passage related primarily to the restoration from Babylon, the entire description should fit those events naturally, in every part, and without violence; while in its figurative or typical application to the gospel age it might fit less appositely. This law of language is too obvious to need proof.—One of the important test words in this verse

is that which is rendered, "bringeth good tidings." It means precisely, one who is publishing this gospel, corresponding to the Greek *Evangelizo*, and to the etymological sense of the word *Evangelist*, as we apply it, (*e. g.*) to the first preachers of the gospel, the twelve disciples. Yet here it rather refers to the earlier heralds who gave the first announcement of Messiah's coming, *e. g.*, John Baptist, and not excluding those angelic heralds of whom Luke's narrative speaks (Luke 1: 11-20, 26-35, and 2: 9-15). All these were publishers of peace and of salvation. They came to say unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!" which, translated into New Testament idiom, is, "The kingdom of God or of heaven is at hand." Jesus, the Messiah, is coming; aye, he *has come*; he ascends his throne and sets up his kingdom of truth, love and righteousness. He, O Zion, is emphatically *thy God*! —Precisely this expressive word, a herald of glad tidings, appears in chaps. 40: 9, and 41: 27, and serves to connect those passages with this.—The reader will note the strength of this idea in the verse before us—repeated, expanded, modified in every form to give the fullest and strongest sense of *joyful tidings, tidings of good; publishing peace; publishing salvation*. Can it be supposed that this refers only to the restoration from Babylon? Does not the very supposition shake our confidence in the sound, calm good sense of the prophet? What more could he have said if he really meant to paint the scenes of the Savior's birth and the glories of this gospel age, breaking forth upon the comparative darkness and decrepitude of the Mosaic system? —The conception of messengers seen on the distant mountains, coming with beauteous or as some explain it *timely* feet, is due to the customs of the age. The reader will recall the case of Ahimaaz and Cush (2 Sam. 18: 19-32) as seen running along the distant hills, bringing tidings to David. The practiced eye of the watchman would see such messengers first as they passed over the hill tops in their rapid course. Bearing tidings so joyful, who would not say of these gospel heralds that their very feet were beautiful? Yet perhaps the sense may be—How timely, how very seasonable is this stupendous change! Ah, have not the ages waited full long for this oft-promised coming!

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

Zion's watchmen are the first to see on the distant mountains the feet of those gospel heralds. This conception is thoroughly oriental. See the case of those heralds who brought tidings to David. "The watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall and looked, etc. See also Isa. 21: 6-12.—This verse

should read, "The voice of thy watchmen! They lift up the voice; they shout aloud together; for eye in eye shall they see when the Lord returns to Zion."——The bold form of the first clause is expressive. The far-seeing vision of the prophet gave him first the coming heralds seen crossing the distant mountain tops, rushing on with their burden of glad tidings. Next, lo! a shout of the watchmen! All as one they lift up their voice in joyous outcries; at one and the same moment, they all catch the sight of the coming heralds. They seem intuitively to seize the joyous import of their tidings and pour forth their soul and voice in triumphant song! Is not the scene inspiring? And why should it not be so painted and so felt?——The phrase rendered, "See eye to eye," is strictly, "They shall see eye *in* eye," or "eye with eye." It occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in Num. 14: 14, and is there translated, "face to face." It is there spoken of the manner in which the Lord had been seen by his people Israel, *i. e.*, with open vision, as when two persons meet face to face. The expressions, "face to face," and "mouth to mouth," are analogous to this, "eye to eye," yet not identical. Usage therefore is not quite explicit as to the precise meaning of this expression. The context here however may aid us. It is plain that this is said here of the watchmen on Zion's walls, and given as a reason why they lift up their joyful shouts simultaneously as they see the gospel heralds approaching. They all shout in chorus because they see eye to eye, all looking in the same direction, all at the same instant, and all seeing the same thing. They are not looking into each other's faces or into each other's eyes, as some have construed the words; but all are looking away into the distance to see the coming heralds, and all catch at the same moment the same view of the coming messengers of peace and salvation.——The last clause does not mean and should not read, "bring again Zion," as if the Lord were now bringing Zion home, for the form of the word here used is never transitive. There is another form which is transitive. This can mean nothing else than, *When the Lord returns to Zion*. Precisely this is the view given in the parallel passage (chap. 40: 9, 10) and also (40: 3). Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" He comes! "Behold the Lord God will come," etc. The passage, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," etc., assumes that he is coming back to his Zion. The clause therefore cannot refer to God's bringing Zion back from Babylon. The word "Zion" could hardly be used in this sense for the people in exile. It applies specially to the holy city, yet is sometimes used of the holy people residing there, but never of the exiled people in Babylon.

9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.



The coming of the joyous messengers and the glad welcome of the watchmen having been announced, the next scene in the drama is the joyful songs of the people. Here as usual, Isaiah speaks with the boldest personification, for he does not call on the people of Jerusalem by name; but on all her *waste places* to break forth into joy and song. Surely those hoary wastes, those ancient desolations, over which many an eye had wept and many an heart bled, will leap up with exultant joy! They will lift up their voice together in glorious anthem peals of praise and song! Ah indeed, for the Lord hath comforted his people, not now with promise merely, but with performance, for the *Son of God has come!* This is truly the redeeming of Jerusalem! Say unto her that her warfare—her long bondage to rituals and ceremonies—is accomplished, and her long typified Redeemer has come himself at last. Let the Simeons and the Annas who, to their hoary age have wept and fasted and prayed for this salvation, now lift up their heads with joy and their tremulous voices in exultant song!

10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The Lord girds himself for mighty and glorious manifestations of his spiritual power that the ends of the earth may see his salvation.—To make bare the arm is to gird the loins, leaving the arm uncovered and unincumbered for the most vigorous activities. History records of many celebrated warriors that they went into battle with their right arm naked.—The genius of the Christian age is not centralization but diffusion; is not inaction, but earnest work—its great command being, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This done, all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.

11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean *thing*; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel *will be* your rear-ward.

The conception here is that of the whole people of God moving in solemn procession in which the sacerdotal and military elements are singularly blended. The march through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan is the model and furnishes the imagery and the descriptive terms. Apparently the thing really meant is the analogous march out from the old ritual economy into the new spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. Or perhaps we might better say, out from Judaism and the old Jewish church, now effete and putrid in its moral corruptions, into the new gospel kingdom, open-



ing its warm, free bosom for their home.—The injunction, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord,” receives a forcible comment from the shocking uncleanness of the Jewish priests of that age. Even in the time of Malachi, his rebukes disclose an appalling degeneracy among the priests. New Testament history represents them as more hardened morally than any other class of Jews in that most apostate age. During the interval between the death of Christ and the fall of their city, there were several high priests of unutterably vile character, some of whom bought the high priesthood with money, and others even raised a banditti of ruffians, and seized it by force of arms. “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord,” and look with horror upon such appalling guilt and moral rottenness as distinguished and disgraced the priesthood of that age.—“Ye shall not go forth with trepidation,” as Israel, fleeing before the Egyptian hosts, did to some extent; and would have done much more if God had not been there; nor shall ye go with flight, for Jehovah marches at your head and the God of Israel guards your rear—the pillar of cloud and fire, now before, and again behind, being a symbol of the gracious presence and effective protection of your God.—Many of these terms are borrowed directly from the Mosaic account of the exodus, *e. g.*, “with haste;” for Moses said (Deut. 16: 37), “For thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste.”—Some commentators make those who “bear the vessels of the Lord,” *his armor-bearers*, the original words having that sense in some passages. But even so, the ultimate meaning will be substantially the same, the religious teachers of the people. But this seems to press the military tone of the description too far, especially for this v. 11 which gives prominence to the sacerdotal elements.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

This verse presents two important questions; (1.) Whether the passage (vs. 13–15) has any connection with the preceding context, and also with the following context (chap. 53), and if any, what? (2.) *Who* is “my servant?” Is he, or is he not, the Messiah?

(1.) On the first point my views have already been in part expressed. I think it entirely clear that the preceding context (vs. 1–12) treats directly of the coming of the Messiah, and of the opening of the gospel age, the grand transition from Judaism to Christianity—the latter, thought of as opening a new and glorious era of spiritual light and of the power of divine truth and of the Spirit unto salvation for all the tribes of the earth. I hold this in opposition to the somewhat common view that the passage has primary and special reference to the restoration from captivity in Babylon. See notes on vs. 5–8 and the introduction to the chapter.—Setting aside this very unsatisfactory construction of the pas-

sage and applying it to the transition from Judaism to Christianity, the connection of v. 13 with what precedes is direct and close. Nothing could be more appropriate than to pass from general views of the gospel age to a more specific view of its great central Personage, the Messiah. The connection becomes even more close if we accept the correct view of "the God of Israel their rear-ward" as presented in the clause immediately preceding. For, who was he that moved at the head of the columns of Israel in their forty years' procession through the wilderness, manifesting his presence in the pillar of cloud and of fire? His character is well defined and his person identified in these words: "I will send an angel before thee: beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for *my name is in him*. Ex. 23: 20-23. This "angel," so called because *sent* on this special mission, can be no other than the Messiah, pertinently called "the God of Israel" because he led them through that wilderness to Canaan. Here also he appears in analogous relations to his people in the Christian age as the Lord's servant.

The connection of this passage (vs. 13-15) with chap. 53 is also direct and immediate. Indeed, the passage, chap. 53: 1-10 takes up and expands the thought, briefly presented in the parenthesis (chap. 52: 14), showing how it came to pass that "his visage was so marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men." The remaining verses, (chap. 53: 10-12) correspond with the leading thought in chap. 52: 14, 15—the wonderful relation between Christ's humiliation and sufferings on the one hand, and his transcendent success in saving lost men on the other.

(2.) As to the other main question; Who is the personage spoken of here as "my servant?" only one opinion can be sustained: he is the great Messiah. The connection with the verses preceding shows it. The usage of this term in 42: 1-4, and 43: 10, and 49: 3, 6, and 53: 11, and the New Testament quotations of this class of prophecies (*e. g.*, Matt. 12: 18-21), combine to place this construction beyond all doubt. Furthermore, the perfect coincidence between this passage and the New Testament doctrine of Christ, first crucified, then rising triumphantly and exalted gloriously, and rewarded with victorious success in the salvation of the nations—brings in an array of evidence which it would seem no candid mind can resist.—In a passage so important as this, considerable interest attaches to the history of its interpretation. Hengstenberg has discussed this topic very elaborately in his *Christology*; Barnes also and Alexander in their commentaries.—Comprehensively, the important facts are that the earliest traces of Jewish opinion show that they applied it to the Messiah; *e. g.*, the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it, "My servant, the Messiah." This is supposed to bear date before the Christian era. That this opinion was held by the oldest school of Jewish interpreters is freely admitted by the Jewish doctors of the middle ages who them-

selves discarded the Messianic interpretation because they discarded the Christian Messiah; *e. g.*, Aben-Ezra, Jarchi, and Abarbanel.—In the Christian church, the Messianic interpretation was held almost universally until the close of the eighteenth century. It was then abandoned by various German critics who had previously discarded the doctrine of atonement and of divine inspiration. Their denial of its reference to the Messiah may very properly prompt us to a more vigilant examination of the subject and to a more thorough canvassing of its significance and weighing of its proofs; but need shake no man's faith, for the passage rejoices in the most searching scrutiny and triumphs only the more, by how much the more severe is the ordeal of criticism through which skeptical minds may cause it to pass.

Turning now to consider the passage itself, the reader will observe the call for special attention; "Behold;" note carefully what is to be said of "my servant." "He will *do wisely*;" for this better expresses the precise thought than the English version, "deal prudently." All his ways will be characterized by consummate wisdom. He will develop the true idea of moral power. Going forth from the bosom of the Father to reclaim an apostate race, he will take the wisest possible course; he will show that he understands perfectly the moral nature of the race he came to save, and will bring the best possible appliances of truth and motive to bear on their consciences and on their hearts.—On the other hand his wisdom will develop itself admirably as toward God and his moral government over men and over the entire moral universe. With far-reaching grasp of thought, he will see what must be done to sustain the law and throne of the Supreme King of the universe so as to make it safe to pardon rebels. In this direction, his wisdom will be most signally and sublimely displayed.—It is not inappropriate to add that as himself King in the realm of universal providence over all human affairs and events, he will manifest ineffable wisdom, giving occasion to such men as Paul when his prophetic eye caught the vision of Christ's ways of providence toward both Jews and Gentiles in their final consummation, to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11: 33.)—Gifted with such wisdom, and managing his stupendous mission to earth so wisely, the consequence will be, "he will be exalted and extolled, and be very high." "Extolled" is here, not in its secondary sense, *praised*; but in its primary sense, *elevated*, raised to supreme dignity and glory. All these terms concur in this one idea, which is put in its strongest possible form by the accumulation of all the words of the language which express it, heightened by the intensive, *very, exceedingly*, at the end.

A practical question of no small importance arises here, viz., whether this exaltation contemplates the glory and honor he received from the Father, especially at his ascension to heaven and

without particular reference to the *success* of his great work as Redeemer of men; or whether, on the contrary, it has special reference to his success in this work, and of course indicates the very highest measure of ultimate success.—I hold to the latter view as being not only justified but demanded by the strain of the context, both the preceding and the following. For, wise management looks toward success as its aim and its legitimate result. The natural fruit of his doing wisely is that he succeeds perfectly. The precise point in vs. 14, 15, is *success*—success in baptizing many nations with the spirit and power of his truth and of his love; success in gaining the conscience and the heart of kings who stand in wondering awe before him as the revealer of glorious truth unknown to the ages before. So also the outcome of chap. 53, is triumphant success, not only despite of, but in consequence of, his humiliation, sufferings, scorn and death. For and because of these sufferings and sacrifices, God will give him a posterity and a long duration of effective rule, and success in doing the pleasure of the Lord (v. 10). He will have so much fruit of his agony as will richly satisfy even the longings of such love for lost human souls as his. The knowledge of him will avail to justify myriads of guilty, condemned sinners, because he has borne their iniquities (v. 11); and finally v. 12 speaks directly of his spoils as a mighty conqueror, and represents them as being very great whether relatively to other great conquerors or to the portion of his grand adversary and antagonist, the Prince of darkness.—Hence it must be admitted that the drift of this entire passage, closing with chap. 53, contemplates, not Christ's simple exaltation on his throne in heaven, irrespective of his success in his work as *Savior* of men, but precisely his success in this great work—the glory of victory over Satan and sin in the grand conflict in which human souls, the living nations of men, are the prize for the conqueror.—Enlarging the context so as to embrace chaps. 54 and 55, we might draw from it yet farther confirmation of the position above taken.—This conclusion is one of rich and sublime moral significance. It shows that in the grand struggle between truth and error, holiness and sin, Christ and Satan, a large place must be assigned for the conversion of men, and relatively a small one for their hopeless destruction; that a multitude which no man can number are to be saved, and a much less number lost; the heel of one party wounded; the head of the other crushed (Gen. 3: 15). It also implies that there must be a long reign of peace and purity over the teeming generations of earth's people, while the present order of things continues and before the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and those then living shall be changed. This conflict and victory are things of the Christian age, the gospel dispensation—the grand elements of which—the universal preaching of the gospel, and the universal mission of the Spirit—are precisely the requisite and divinely appointed agencies for such results. The great problem is, Given, a risen Savior; the Holy

Ghost sent down to reveal Christ and thereby renew human hearts to holiness; a glorious gospel to be preached and Christ's church commissioned to preach it to every creature—to find these predicted results, viz., complete success and magnificent victory on Zion's side, to the glory of her risen Lord and King. "Hath God spoken and shall he not do it? Has King Messiah planned and wrought wisely, and shall not the outcome be *success*, at once complete, joyous to himself, and glorious to his kingdom and to his Infinite Father?

14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men);

15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

The parenthetic clause in v. 14, suggests the grounds of the astonishment occasioned by the aspect of this servant of the Lord during his humiliation. His visage [general aspect] was that of one worn, wasted and wan—a fearful sufferer, surpassing in these respects what they had ever seen among men. Could he be a King and yet wear such an aspect? Could he be a good man, and yet such a sufferer, moving in a rank so low, and in poverty so extreme? So the many thought, and hence they were *astonished* at him—the prophet using here a verb which as Dr. Alexander remarks "expresses a mixture of surprise, contempt and aversion." It is often used of those who are thought to suffer under special judgments from God; e. g., Lev. 26: 32, and Ezek. 27: 35, and Jer. 18: 16.—Such was this "servant" of God in the days of his humiliation in the flesh. With this, the prophet puts in strong antithesis, the days of his subsequent success and glory. Many *individuals* who saw him in the flesh are on one side of this antithesis; but many *nations*, seeing him in the glory of his gospel, stand on the other side. The many individuals were amazed at his marred visage and saw only things toward which they felt contempt and aversion; but the many nations shall be baptized into a new life unto God; their kings shall shut their mouths in reverential awe before him, rejoicing and admiring that through him they see what no tongue had ever told them before. In the former state his presence bore with it little or no power to the masses; but in the latter, his truth and his Spirit bathe the nations with a glorious spiritual power.

The word "sprinkle" is richly expressive. Its established use in the Mosaic ritual clothes it with significance as an emblem of moral purification, bringing the sprinkled one into a new moral state and into new moral relations to God as both forgiven and cleansed. Ezekiel takes up from Isaiah this very term and ex-

pands its precious significance; "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes that ye may keep my judgments and do them." Ezek. 36: 25-27.—It need surprise no one that Gesenius and other German critics, with their views of the atonement and of the gospel scheme, and also of inspiration, should resist with their utmost zeal and effort, the gospel and Christian sense of this word, "sprinkle." Gesenius claims that the verb means here, "He shall cause many nations to rejoice in himself." But he does not adduce a solitary case of such usage. On the contrary, he derives this meaning solely from what he supposes to be the etymological sense of the root, viz, to *leap for joy*; and then to leap forth sparkling as liquids when poured out, whence [he claims] comes the idea of sprinkling or pouring. Yet no man contends more strongly than he that *usage*, and not supposed etymology, "gives law to language," fixing the only safe and reliable significance of words. And no man can deny that by Hebrew usage this word means to sprinkle.—The passage therefore grasps the magnificent contrast between the dishonor and even scorn heaped on the man of Nazareth while he sojourned among men; and the glory and honor given him and also the heart-homage accorded to him by whole nations and their kings when his gospel shall have overspread the earth and shall have baptized both kings and people with its renewing power. This second aspect of this "servant" of God shows in what sense he "shall be exalted and extolled and be very high."



## CHAPTER LIII.

THIS chapter treats of the subject presented in chap. 52: 13-15, expanding much more fully what is there stated only in the most general form. Especially vs. 1-9 correspond to the parenthetic clause in 52: 14, showing how and why this "servant" appeared more marred and worn than any man. Still more particularly, v. 1, following the prediction (52: 15) of the great power of gospel truth upon nations and kings, would apprise us that his reception at first was the reverse of this, and that before he reached the point of victory, he passed through scenes of extreme humiliation, suffering and public contempt. At first, few received the gospel message (v. 1); the Messiah's appearance impressed them unfavorably (v. 2); and men even despised

him (v. 3); but in fact he held this low position and suffered thus for our sake, not for his own (vs. 4-6). He suffered with surprising meekness (v. 7); even the men of his time did not know his mission or understand that he suffered for the sins of his people (v. 8). The scenes of his death were significant (v. 9); yet God who laid these sufferings upon him will reward him gloriously (v. 10), and make his death, righteousness and salvation to many (v. 11); and like a conqueror he shall have great spoil in the end (v. 12).

1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

The speakers here are the gospel heralds of chap. 52: 7, giving the result of their first labors in preaching the gospel.—The word "report" is not altogether the most happy, since the idea of a rumor or a mere *report* has no place here. The sense would have been made entirely clear if the passage referred to, viz., chap. 52: 7, had been translated, "How beautiful are his feet who announceth peace, who announceth salvation;" and then this verse, retaining the same word (as a noun) had read, "Who hath believed our *announcement*"—the truth we have proclaimed and *caused men to hear?* (Hebrew.) This is precisely the connection of thought. So also the revealing of the Lord's arm looks to the prediction (52: 10); "The Lord hath made bare his holy *arm* in the eyes of all the nations," as if to say, Upon whom has that promise been yet fulfilled? Who has yet felt the power of God unto his conversion and salvation?

2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

Instead of directly answering the questions of v. 1, showing who or how many, the prophet quietly assumes the truth which the questions imply, viz., very few indeed; and proceeds to assign the occasion. Remarkably he speaks in the name of the Jewish people who were contemporaries of Christ during his earthly life. The first person plural, "when *we* saw him" (v. 2); "*we* hid *our* faces from him" (vs. 3); "*our* griefs" (v. 4), etc., must be so understood.—The figures and the form of expressing the thought in v. 2 follow the passage in chap. 11: 1; "There shall come forth a rod from the stump of Jesse, and a branch [or shoot] shall spring up from his roots"—the main purpose being to represent the Messiah as in his earliest manifestations exceedingly diminutive, unattractive, unpromising and void of prestige, raising no high expectations *because he utterly*



*failed to meet the foregone ideas of the Jews.*—The Hebrew makes the first verb past tense, "And he grew up"—the case standing before the prophet's eye as having already transpired. —"Before *him*," should grammatically refer to "the Lord," the nearest antecedent, meaning under the watchful eye of God, yet not implying that it was in the Lord's view of him that he was small and insignificant. These low thoughts of him were in the minds of the people only.—"A root out of dry ground" is rather a *root-shoot*; a sprout from the root.—"We saw no beauty," none of the charms of fitness as meeting our ideas and our sense of national want. They thought the nation needed a mighty conqueror to place Judah at the head among human kingdoms. In such a Messiah they would have seen all beauty and comeliness. In the lowly Jesus they saw none.

3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The word rendered "rejected" admits the strong sense, *thrust out* of society; or this modification, who *ceased from among men*, or from being considered one of them. Yet even under this last named modification which the etymology of the word favors, the sense in this connection must be, not that he withdrew from society of his own motion, but that he was ruled out by the public sentiment of the people. They did not account him as belonging to their society.—"A man of sorrows" is one distinguished and pre-eminent in this respect. "One known to grief," whom grief (personified) might claim as his intimate acquaintance and associate.—The next clause which is literally, "And as a hiding of the face from him" or "from us"—(the Hebrew pronoun being ambiguous) may be filled out either; "There was on his part a hiding of his own face from us," or, "There was on our part a hiding of our faces from him." In the former case, he is tacitly compared to a leper, or to one conscious of being not welcome in society, who shrinks therefore from public view. In the latter case, he is one from whom all turn away as in loathing and disgust. The ultimate sense in either case is essentially the same. The verse treats however of the public feeling toward him, and not of his feeling before or toward the public.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was*



bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

These verses commence the explanation of this wonderful life of suffering and disesteem.—“Surely” is expressive, as if the people would say, We have at last come to understand the secret; we have reached the radical truth of the case. The fact is, he has been bearing *our* troubles and *our* sins.—The word for “griefs” means primarily, sicknesses, yet is put here for all ailments and evils.—The sense of the word rendered “*hath borne*” has been sharply contested and criticised, because of its intimate relations to the essential nature of the atonement.—Some paraphrase it, *To bear with*, in the sense of patiently enduring; others, to bear in mere sympathy, suffering with and because of others’ sufferings; others still, to take away—assuming unwarrantably that God may and does take away sin without a vicarious atonement. But fortunately the prophet gives us an accumulation of synonymous words and phrases as one who intended to place his meaning beyond all rational doubt. Here the next word, rendered “*carried*,” can mean nothing else than that he endured suffering in his own person for the sins of men—bore the grief in himself which otherwise they must themselves have borne. This is precisely the thought in the next verse, “He was pierced because of our sins,” bruised, smitten because of our iniquities. The chastisement that brought peace to us fell on him. In his stripes—by virtue of them—“there was healing to us.”—So v. 6, “we all like sheep *had*” (rather than ‘*have*’) “gone astray.” All the race had been scattered like sheep with no shepherd; and “the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,” that in a vastly important sense, he might himself bear it. The result of his bearing it is given in this passage so far forth as respects the welfare of his people. It is under God the means of their salvation. His chastisement brings their peace; his stripes, their healing. His being bruised suffices instead of their suffering the penalty of their own sins.—The same views are reiterated in the words (v. 8); “For the transgression of my people was he stricken;” and (v. 10) “When his soul shall make a sin-offering;” and (v. 11); “By the knowledge of himself shall the righteous one, my servant, insure justification to many, for he shall bear their iniquities; and (v. 12) where his magnificent spoils of victory appear as his reward for pouring out his soul even unto death, and for his “bearing the sins of many.” We can not be too grateful for these amplified, varied, and yet marvelously coincident and unanimous declara-

tions to the effect of *vicarious atonement*—Christ suffering *for* his people, to make the free pardon of their sins possible without peril to the majesty of the law they have broken.—And here it can not be said too emphatically that these numerous, various, yet equivalent forms of expression are all borrowed from the Hebrew sacrificial system, and therefore must be interpreted in the light of that system. They all assume that this great system was instituted of God for the purpose of illustrating to the human mind the vital law of God's kingdom, that suffering must first be borne by some innocent being *for the guilty* before he can be forgiven. God requires some adequate expression to be made of his displeasure against sin before it is safe for him to pardon. He must not give the least occasion to his moral subjects to suppose him indifferent to their sinning. The infliction of suffering is the natural even if not the only possible means by which he can express his abhorrence of sin and his regard for law and obedience. Hence in this great illustrative sacrificial system, the Lord selected those animals which best personify innocence, gentleness, meekness, *e. g.*, lambs, goats, heifers, bullocks, doves; and made them the symbols of the suffering, atoning "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." They must die; their blood must be poured forth publicly, solemnly, in sacred symbol; and then be sprinkled upon the guilty, or upon the altar before God. So those animals bore the sins of the people. Otherwise the transgressors bore their own sins, unpardoned. The Mosaic record gives abundant cases of each sort. See cases of sinners bearing their own sins, Lev. 5 : 1, 17, and 24 : 15. Num. 5 : 31, and 9 : 13. In this latter case, the man who "forbeareth to keep the Passover" [when he could] "shall be cut off from among his people because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season; that man shall *bear his sin*."—The transactions of the great annual day of atonement (see Lev. 16) illustrate forcibly the central idea of the system. A special and additional symbol of the *taking away* of sin was provided here in the second goat upon whose "head the High Priest laid both his hands, confessed over him all the sins of Israel, *putting them upon the head of the goat*, and then sent him away into the wilderness." "And the goat shall bear upon himself all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (vs. 21, 22). Thus in this new symbol it is again shown that sins are by atonement *taken away*.—A careful study of this sacrificial system will suffice to show that this *bearing of sin* was not the mental sympathy of the innocent sufferer with the guilty sinner—a thing not supposable in the case of animals, and therefore not touched even remotely by these symbols; nor was it the long-suffering endurance or forbearance of the sufferer or of any one else, with the guilty—this

likewise being utterly foreign from these symbols in which animals suffer for guilty men : nor was it the literal and precise transfer of sins from their guilty author to a second party so that the latter should be really their author, since such transfer is simply impossible in itself, and doubly impossible in reference to animals not moral agents. But on the contrary the system does imply to a certain degree a transfer of suffering from the one who deserved to another who did not deserve it ; or in other words, the actual endurance of suffering even unto death by some innocent being as a condition precedent to pardon for the guilty—precedent, that is, to the actual taking away of sin, considered as a fact which in the eye of law demands God's displeasure and his infliction of penalty.—Such is the sense required for this class of terms in this chapter, by the genius and the varied phraseology of the Hebrew sacrificial system.—It should be added also that the New Testament sustains this view most amply, showing, *e. g.*, that “the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20 : 28) ; “Who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2 : 6) ; “who is the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world” (John 1 : 29) ; “who his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, by whose stripes we are healed” (1 Peter 2 : 21) ; “who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this he did once [for all] when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7 : 27).—This mass of testimony, these concurrent witnesses, the Hebrew sacrificial system bodily, and the references to it by the apostles, can not be overruled and set aside by the quotation (Matt. 8 : 16, 17) which represents the passage before us, “he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,” as fulfilled in Christ's healing the sick. That healing was an incipient illustration of the power of his atonement. It seems to have been hailed by Matthew as an indication that the Messiah had begun his redemptive work by doing for the bodies of men, illustratively, what he came specially to do for their souls. He put away the maladies of human flesh in order to show the more palpably how he would ultimately put away the greater and worse maladies of human spirits.—From this general view of the true sense in which Christ bore our sins, we return to note more particularly some of the special phrases of our passage.—In v. 4 the words “he” and “we” are in Hebrew slightly emphatic, designed to mark an antithesis. *He* was bearing our griefs while *we* supposed him to be smitten of God as a malefactor.—In v. 5 “the chastisement of our peace,” will bear no other appropriate sense except this ; The chastisement that brought *peace* [all blessings] to us, fell on him. He suffered the pain : we reap the resulting peace and blessedness.—The New Testament allusions to this passage, though not

precise quotations, are yet pertinent and instructive. Thus Paul (Eph. 2 : 13, 14) speaks of Christians as once godless [atheists] in the world ; “but now in Christ Jesus, ye who were once far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ;” “for *he is our peace*,” etc. ; and to the Colossians (1 : 20, 21) he says, “It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fullness dwell ; and having *made peace* through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; and ye who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Plainly the apostles found in this chapter a mine of precious truth respecting the vicarious sufferings of Christ for the sins of men and the blessings which accrue therefrom to his believing people.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

In Hebrew, the emphatic pronouns *he* or *himself*, before the second verb, indicate something more than the mere repetition expressed in the English version, “He was oppressed and he was afflicted.” It might be put thus ; “He was oppressed, yea even *he*” [the meek and lovely one] “was afflicted,” etc. ; or thus : “He was oppressed and he *bowed himself*” [meekly] “to the infliction.” The latter being in full harmony with the subsequent context, is the better sense.—Remarkably, the verb rendered, “he opened” is in both instances future, “he *will not* open his mouth,” as if the prophet saw the scene transpiring, and seemed to know intuitively, or to infer from his extraordinary meekness, that he would not open his mouth in complaint or in resistance.—The comparison of Christ to a lamb borne to the slaughter was the more pertinent from the lips of Isaiah [or of any other Hebrew prophet] because such scenes had so often passed under his eye and the eye of his people in the sacrifices at the temple.—The New Testament allusions to this are also numerous and striking. At the head of them stand the wonderful announcement of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus coming and cried out, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” Philip, teaching this new gospel to the man of Ethiopia, “began at this Scripture and *preached to him Jesus*” (Acts 8 : 32, 35). Peter comprehended its beautiful analogies admirably, saying, “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Peter 1 : 18, 19.) He seems to paraphrase this figure in the words, “Who when he was reviled reviled not again [*i. e.*, retorting their re-

vilings]; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2 : 23.)

8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

The second clause rendered, "Who shall declare his generation?" has been explained variously. It is perhaps impossible to determine with absolute certainty the precise sense of the prophet in these words. Fortunately no important truth hinges upon their construction, since the general sense of the chapter is scarcely affected by these diversities.—Hengstenberg, placing this clause in a parenthesis, gives it this sense; "yet who can declare his posterity?" *i. e.*, who can enumerate the myriads of his people? the prophet anticipating the thought which is brought out more fully in v. 10: "He shall see his seed," a numerous offspring.—One objection to this construction is that it is out of the course of thought, anticipating a future idea too long beforehand; and another, that the word for "generation" scarcely admits of this sense, posterity, except in the plural number.—Alexander, agreeing with Gesenius in the main, gives it thus; "And in his generation, who will think that he was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people [as] a curse for them?" That is, very few of his contemporaries will understand the object of his death—that he died because of the sins of his people.—No very strong objection seems to lie against this construction. The strongest is that the genius of Isaiah's style dislikes long, dependent clauses, and loves short, sententious and parallel expressions; also that the word rendered "for" rarely bears the sense he gives it.—Another construction may be mentioned. "He was forcibly taken [to the cross] from confinement [*i. e.*, arrest and duress], and from a mock trial; (and upon the men of his generation who will meditate?), *i. e.*, Who will think or speak of them in fit terms? Who will estimate their guilt adequately, or speak of it appropriately? "For he was cut off from the land of the living," as one unfit to live! This meek and righteous man was positively murdered! Yet it was for the transgression of my people that he was stricken.—The word rendered "declare" occurs in this precise form only in Ps. 143: 5. "I will *muse* on the work of thy hands." It means to mediate upon; to think of deliberately; also to speak out one's thoughts.—The order of the words in Hebrew is an index to the course of thought, thus; Of the men of his generation who can bear to think? "For he was cut off

from the land of the living,' etc. The writer's mind is horrified at the thought of those men, dragging the meek and lovely Lamb from his state of duress and his mock trial, away to crucifixion;—those wicked men—who can bear to think of them! For they even took his life!

The great body of commentators have rightly regarded this disputed clause as a parenthesis—a remark dropped by the way, expressing a suggested thought somewhat aside from the current of his remarks. It is this circumstance which has made it so difficult to determine what this incidental thought is.—I prefer the last mentioned construction because it is entirely in the line of the writer's thought, and harmonizes fully with the context both the preceding and the following. Such horror at the conduct of the men of his generation is every way befitting, and corresponds well with the reason assigned in the next clause—his death by their violence, his cold-blooded murder!—Again, this construction answers unexceptionably to the usage of the words and to the order of their arrangement.

9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

The first verb is literally, He gave his grave with the wicked. This however is a well known Hebrew idiom, meaning, They gave, or *men* gave him his burial with the wicked. They had put him to death as a malefactor, and had thought to bury him (as is usual for malefactors) in disgrace, but God overruled their purpose in this respect. The scenes of the crucifixion became so appalling even to his murderers that they failed to carry out their plans. By a striking providence, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, provided him an honorable burial in his own rock-hewn tomb (Mat. 27: 57–60).—The close coincidence between prophecy and fact, in points so far beyond the range of human sagacity, may well confound gainsayers, and put skeptical critics upon their sharpest devices to break its force.—The reason assigned for this honor in his burial is his innocence. He had neither done nor said any thing wrong; had done nothing violent; had spoken nought deceitful.

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him: he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

In this verse the prophet reaches the point of transition from suffering to reward. The last clause in the description of his

sufferings introduces the purpose and pleasure [will or plan] of God in it. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" "he made him sick" [Heb.], *i. e.*, the Lord suffered these sore calamities to fall upon his servant, the Messiah.—Remarkably "the pleasure of the Lord" in the great reward of the Messiah is closely correlated with its "pleasing the Lord to bruise him," as said in the first clause. In the original as in the English version, the word in each clause is the same, showing that the Lord was pleased to bruise him, not because of any displeasure with him; not as wishing him pain or evil; and not at all as approving the spirit or the deeds of his murderers; but as looking toward the ulterior reward—the glorious results which could not be reached save through much suffering. He had joy in the suffering only because the results were so surpassingly joyous and could be gained in no other way.—For, let it be considered, Christ's atoning death is correlated to the law of God and to the honor of his throne as the Lawgiver of the universe. For the best of all reasons, God has infinite pleasure in sustaining the dignity of his throne and the moral force of his law; and also infinite pleasure in saving sinners from eternal death. Hence his pleasure in the means necessary for combining both these results; in other words, his pleasure in the sufferings of his well beloved son.—This assumes that in his moral law God is not tyrannous, nor in its penalty revengeful and malevolent; but in both is precisely and perfectly benevolent, the penalty looking only to the highest good of the universe. Hence the joy of the Father when a far less amount of suffering in his Son availed to save an indefinitely greater amount of suffering in the case of the pardoned, and to ensure a far greater good to his entire moral kingdom.—The middle clause I prefer to read, "When" (or "if") his soul shall make a sin-offering, then he shall have a numerous posterity and a long life, Hebrew conceptions of the greatest of blessings. The passage may allude to the promises made and oft repeated to the patriarchs, a posterity like the sands of the sea.—That his *soul* makes the sin-offering means somewhat more than that he himself made it. It implies the cost of his *life*—his own heart's blood.—The New Testament both reiterates and expands this idea of Christ's death as a sin-offering, analogous to those sacrifices which bore this name in the Mosaic system. Thus Paul (2 Cor. 5: 21); "For he (God) hath made him who knew no sin to be sin" [a sin-offering] "for us." The New Testament word, "propitiation," has the same meaning; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness," etc., (Rom. 3: 25). So also 1 John 2: 2, and 4: 10.—That Christ offered himself as a sacrifice unto God, is the doctrine taught, Heb. 9: 14. "If the blood of bulls, etc., purified the flesh,



how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience," etc.—The ultimate thought of the verse is that because the Messiah gave up his life as a sin-offering, he shall be rewarded with a people indefinitely numerous and a reign of peace and love indefinitely vast and glorious, in all which the Father will rejoice, for this is his pleasure, and this work shall therefore prosper in Messiah's hand.—Hengstenberg has well said that this "*seed*" are the "many nations" whom he shall sprinkle (52: 15); the same whom he takes as his spoil (53: 12); whom he justifies (v. 11), and for whom he intercedes (v. 12).

11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

This means that he will see so great results of his sufferings that his benevolent love of human well-being will be satisfied therewith.—Following the Hebrew closely, we must read; "Through knowing him as a Savior, he, the Righteous One, my servant, shall make many righteous"—in the sense of securing for them justification or pardon of sins before God. This sense of making righteous is fully determined by the last clause; "*For* he shall bear their iniquities."—*He* bears their sins: *they* obtain righteousness before God through him. The original gives precisely this emphasis to the word "*he*," virtually placing it in antithesis with those who obtain righteousness through him.

12. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors;—and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the first clause, two constructions have been proposed. One, following the Septuagint and the Vulgate, makes the great and the strong themselves the portion which God gives to the Messiah. The other supposes that God gives him his portion *with* or *among* the greatest conquerors, *i. e.*, a portion no less great than theirs. The original is not entirely free from ambiguity. Literally it reads, "I will divide to him among the great, and the strong he shall divide [as] spoil." Yet it may mean, *with* or *among* the strong and not the strong as a whole.—In either construction the promise ensures to the Messiah a vast



and glorious reward—a partition to him of the spoils of earth, in the conflict between himself and Satan for human souls, with which spoils he will be satisfied, and in which he may justly triumph.—The reason for this reward is still repeated; because he “hath poured out his soul unto death”—literally hath made bare his soul to death; hath suffered himself to “be numbered with transgressors, and bare the sin of many.”—For the sense in which Christ has borne the sins of men, see notes on vs. 4–6. —The “many” here correspond to the “many” whom he will justify (v. 11) and to his “seed,” his numerous posterity (v. 10).—The last verb—to “make intercession,” is future; he *will* make intercession; accurately expressing the cardinal distinction in respect to time between his making atonement by his death which is always spoken of as a thing then past, and his making intercession for his people, which continues indefinitely into the future. So the New Testament witnesseth; “Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7: 25). See also Heb. 9: 24, and Rom. 8: 34, and 1 John 2: 1. This passage therefore should be read, “And he *will* make intercession for the transgressors,” *i. e.*, for all who in all future time will accept his intercession in their behalf.



## CHAPTER LIV.

THIS chapter stands in the closest relations of thought with the two that immediately precede it. Chapter 52 contemplates Zion, the ancient church, as coming forth from her quasi captivity under the bonds of the Mosaic dispensation into the glorious freedom of the Christian age; the glad heralds of gospel light announcing to her the coming of her Messiah; from which the prophet passes to speak somewhat fully of this “servant of the Lord” as winning immense and glorious reward by his sufferings and death. This reward lies in nations saved through his blood and by means of his revealed truth. Of course in this achievement of victory over the powers of sin and Satan, his people, “workers together with him” and identified with him in the deepest sympathy of their heart, must participate. Victory to him is infinite joy to them. The gathering of his spoils (53: 12) is the accumulation of converts within her tents and the filling of her solitudes with a teeming population. Upon this fact, the chapter before us bears. After what has been said of the Messiah’s triumph through suffering and of his seeing the travail of his soul, nothing could be more natural and legitimate than to pass next to consider the bearing

of these achievements upon his church and people. Hence the prophet rushes into the midst of this sublimely magnificent theme, calling on Zion to break forth into song; to enlarge her tents for these new accessions; and to open heart, hand, and home to these new comers. He assures her that her Maker is her husband, remembers her with undying love, and after temporary absence and alienation, returns to her with everlasting mercies; will rebuild her fallen walls with ineffable beauty and glory; will teach all her children righteousness, and will ensure her against the weapons of her foes.

1. Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Zion, thought of as a wife and mother, the accessions to her in numbers being accounted as her children, has long been barren, that is, during those ages of spiritual decline and dearth which preceded the coming of Christ. Now the era of domestic joy returns. More are the children of her who has been desolate than falls to the common lot of the married wife. The gospel age is to be distinguished by Pentecostal ingatherings and immense accessions from the Gentile nations.

2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

With the figure of oriental and nomadic life in tents before the mind, Zion is exhorted to enlarge her tent-room; to spread out far more widely the tent-curtains within which she dwells; to push this enlargement with unsparing hand; to make her tent-cords longer and her tent-pins stronger; for she must enlarge ["break forth"] on every hand; her children must come into permanent possession of the Gentiles ["inherit" them as legitimate heirs by divine gift], and she must fill with her redeemed people the cities now desolate.

4. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

Zion need no longer fear the reproach of widowhood and barrenness, i. e., the dishonor of a languishing cause and of restricted

influence and prestige before the world. "The shame of her youth," *i. e.*, the low esteem accorded to her during her early ages, shall pass away under her glorious enlargement in the latter days.

5. For thy Maker is thine husband; The LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

The magnificent thoughts of this verse are clothed in the richest poetical conceptions and in the finest style of Hebrew parallelism.—The God who made thee is thy Husband, and he is truly the Lord of Hosts, God of the celestial armies, bearing this name only because he sustains these relations and therefore the name well expresses the precious reality. Then essentially the same thoughts are put in new phrase and figure. Thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, their very Savior, their dearest Friend, to be particularly appropriated by them as their own Holy One. He is also truly "the God of the whole earth," and will evince himself to be so by bringing the whole earth to know, accept, love and adore him as their God. "The God of the whole earth shall he *be called*" means precisely, The God of the whole shall he *truly become*. He shall bear this name because his actual relations will justify it, because he is the God of all the earth in very deed.—In Hebrew life, the redeemer was nearest of kin, and especially bound to the sacred duties of personal protection, redress of wrongs and vindication of rights. In case his friend is murdered he must become the "avenger of blood;" if his friend falls into poverty and is compelled to alienate his lands, he must redeem them. Next to that of husband toward wife, his was in Hebrew life the relation that combined in itself most of the elements of a near and faithful friend, bound to make any possible sacrifices and efforts for the welfare of his brother. In this sense Jehovah appears here as the Redeemer as well as the Husband of his people.

6. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

I take the general sense of this verse to be, The Lord hath called thee back into the relation of a wife again, after a temporary divorcement, in which state thou wast forsaken and heart-broken. The first word, "*for*," indicates this logical connection; Thy Maker surely *is* thy Husband, *for* he now invites thee to return into this relationship, despite of its suspension because of thy past sins.—The clause, translated, "When thou wast refused," is literally "for thou *shalt be* refused, saith thy God." It thus becomes a parenthetical clause thrown in to account for her being *recalled* as one previously divorced. The spirit of the passage is, Thou shalt be recalled with renewed and yet stronger

love, to a married life far more rich in its fruits of joy, and those fruits far more enduring.

7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

The thought in v. 6 is reaffirmed here and expanded. Zion was as a wife forsaken during a small moment, anterior to the Christian age, a moment small compared with the long ages of her joyful reunion and abiding domestic felicity with her glorious Savior and Lord. The patent, salient points of the figure present the case of a wife put away for a small moment, say an hour or a day, but restored again with outgushing compassion and conjugal love for long years of connubial felicity. So God renews his affection and its manifestations to his covenant people in the rich gospel blessings of the Christian age.

8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

A thought so precious will bear to be reiterated and set forth in new and more resplendent light. This hiding of God's love is but temporary, only a transient outburst of displeasure, a sudden emotion which passed over in a moment; while on the other hand his mercy and his kindness are everlasting. It is only a duration indefinitely long that can suffice to unfold the depth of God's loving kindness to his chosen Zion. The ages of earth's years and centuries are therefore assigned for her triumph and peace in the presence and glory of her divine Redeemer and Husband, compared with which the period of darkness—the face of God scarcely seen—is only “for a moment.”—What a ratio is here by which to measure the ages of Messiah's connubial felicity with his people in the successful diffusion of his gospel among the nations, compared with the small moment of his eclipsed presence and of her disownment and semi-divorce:—the long Messianic reign of the Christian age, compared with the dark but transient period of the ante-Messianic dispensation! The latter, being a known period, becomes the unit of measurement which we may apply to the period contrasted with it, viz., the long ages of Zion's peace, progress, victory and glory in her joyful reunion with her divine Husband and Lord in bringing back the nations to his scepter. The ancient prophets do not give us the duration in years and centuries of this gospel age nor of its strictly Millennial portion; but they do give us this view of its relative length compared with the foregoing age of darkness and divorcement;—this latter a small moment, beclouded with a little wrath; but the former crowned with “great mercies” and “everlasting kindness.”

9. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as

I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

The case is like that of Noah's flood in this respect, viz., that as God bound himself by a solemn oath never to drown the earth again with water; so had he bound himself never again (as before) to be wroth with and to rebuke his Zion. No *such* hiding of his face; no *such* semi-divorce or transient repudiation of his marriage covenant with her should occur again. God's oath written out athwart the sky on his bow in the cloud is his pledge of the former;—as to the latter, his word of the oath correlated with that, stands forth in this passage, a guaranty of equal solemnity that no like visitation of divine displeasure shall come again upon Zion.—This must not be pressed to the extreme of saying that God will never more find any thing in his church to excite his displeasure or to call forth his rebuke. The declaration should be explained within its own limitations—no *such* period of darkness, displeasure and rebuke as that of the age before Christ came. The change from that state of things to the Christian age brought back the presence of God with his people and renewed their spiritual marriage covenant—never to be severed again.—Dr. Alexander well remarks, "That this is not a general promise of security is plain from the fact that the church has always been subjected to vicissitudes and fluctuations. Nor is there any period in her history to which it can properly be applied in a specific sense, except the change of dispensations which was made once for all, and can never be repeated. That the church shall never again be brought under the restrictive institutions of the ceremonial law is neither a matter of course nor a matter of indifference, but a glorious promise, altogether worthy of the solemn oath by which it is attested here."—The reader may fitly take note that this passage squarely confronts and precludes the idea of a return to the Mosaic institutions in any age yet future.

10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

This declares not merely that the mountains shall *sooner* depart and the hills be *sooner* shaken on their foundations than God's kindness shall depart and his covenant be shaken—(although it fully covers and implies this) but it means more, viz., that God's kindness shall outlast the mountains and his covenant stand firm after the hills shall have been shaken to their deep foundations. There is certainly no objection to supposing that the prophet said precisely what he meant; The mountains *shall* depart; the hills shall totter and fall [Heb.]; these pillars of our lower

heavens shall crumble and this great frame-work of earth be dissolved; but God's faithfulness to his people shall only wax the stronger amid these gigantic convulsions of the material universe. —And this is declared by the Lord who hath mercy on thee; or as the Hebrew has it, "the Lord thy Pitier;" the Lord ever full of merciful compassion to his Zion.

11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

In these verses the church appears first as a lone female, long afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted: then as a city, walled and adorned magnificently; the very conception of Zion in that ancient age. God will rebuild her walls from their very base; will lay her stones in the fine paint used by the ancients upon and about the eye; will make sapphires her foundations; her battlements [not "windows"] of rubies ["agates"] sparkling and gleaming in the sunbeams; and her gates of flashing gems ["carbuncles"] and all her borders with stones most beautiful. —This passage is the quarry of thought and figure whence the Revelator John drew out his material for the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). —Remarkably the Hebrew word, "I will lay," *i. e.*, thy stones, is always used elsewhere for the quiet lying down of animals to take their rest. The conception seems to be pastoral—an image of peaceful repose. —"Windows," from the word which means the *sun*, probably refer to the shining battlements and gilded towers which reflected the sunbeams.

13. And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

Dropping all figure and passing from poetic drapery to prosaic simplicity, the prophet gives here the very ideas; all Zion's children *disciples* of the Lord; the Divine Spirit teaching them of God, putting his laws into their minds and writing them in their hearts, as said Jer. 31: 34, and quoted by the writer to the Hebrews (8: 11). The key to this passage is given by our divine Lord himself: It is written in the prophets, "and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me" (John 6: 45). When God by his Spirit teaches the sinner, he leads him at once to Jesus. This teaching is pertinently said by Dr. Alexander to be "the highest of which any rational being is susceptible, viz., that of the Holy Spirit making known the Father and the Son." Paul also (1 Thess. 4: 9) speaks of Christians as "*taught of God* to love one

another." The mission of the Holy Spirit as a teacher is one of the glorious features of the gospel age, a gift precious beyond all measure, which no wealth of rubies and sparkling gems can ever adequately illustrate.—Nor let us omit to notice here the breadth of this prophetic declaration. It is not limited to her gifted prophets, nor to her ordained apostles, bishops, pastors, and preachers; but is shared by *all*; "*all* her children shall be taught of the Lord."—Let the Lord be praised forever for so rich and vast a prophecy of Zion's future light and knowledge! It serves to show *how* it shall come to pass that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (chap. 11: 9). O, what glories of truth, and light, and love are these! No wonder that the peace of Zion's children shall be great under such a divine Teacher and amid the universal prevalence of such knowledge of God!

14. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

The peace promised in the verse previous is founded on intrinsic righteousness.—It has been questioned whether this righteousness is that of God in the sense of faithfulness in fulfilling his promises; or that of men in the sense of sound piety—essential integrity and righteousness toward God and man. Since the verse preceding traces piety in man to the teaching of God, so the idea here seems to be that God's righteous faithfulness secures and establishes man's righteous piety and life. The former includes the latter as the cause does its effect.—The next clause reads in the Hebrew, "Be thou far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from destruction, for it shall not come near thee." The imperative, however, is equivalent to a promise and a prediction. Indeed, it is a very common form of prediction in the writings of Isaiah.

15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

The idea of the fear of enemies leads to farther remarks about them here.—"*They*" who are here supposed to "gather together" are her foes. In the original, the clause, "*not by me*," probably means, not to my standard; not at my signal-call. I am not their captain; I have not called them to such combinations against my people. Hence their projects shall fail.—The last clause reads strictly, "Who has gathered against thee? He shall fall away to thy side." This is the established usage of the verb and preposition used here. See 1 Chron. 12: 19, 20, and 2 Chron. 15: 9. The verb without the preposition has this sense in Jer. 21: 9, and 1 Sam. 29: 3. Hence the meaning here must be, Thy old enemies, once gathering against thee, shall come over to be thy

friends. This construction would imply that *some* at least of those enemies will be converted.

16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

The Lord can promise this with perfect assurance, for his power is absolute over all the enemies of Zion. This is put in a strong form by the minute statement, I am the Creator of the smith who forges their weapons of war; I create the only wasters who can destroy. They could not come into existence without my creative hand, nor continue to live save as I sustained them, and I *shall never lend my power to harm my own Zion*!—The account given here of the smith's process is, "that bloweth into the coal-fire, or fire of coals, and bringeth out by this means his tools for his work"—referring to the manufacture of his own implements. As the smith makes his tools with the aid of fire and hammer, so God can make and use *his* instruments with perfect wisdom and power. As God creates the smith who with the aid of fire makes his hammer, and with the aid of hammer makes the sword and the spear of war, and as God alone sustains him through all these processes, surely this same God can cut short all efforts to harm his Zion at any one of ten thousand points as may be his pleasure.

17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritago of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Neither weapons for violence nor tongue for accusation shall prosper against thee. The former covers war; the latter, litigation. —Such is the "inheritance of the *servants of the Lord*." The plural here looks beyond the one special "servant of the Lord" who appears chaps. 52: 13, and 53: 11, to all his associated people who are identified with himself in sympathy and labor for the common cause. The last clause seems to mean, "And this (or such), is their righteousness from me," saith the Lord. Such is their piety and such its fruits of righteousness from my hand.



## CHAPTER LV.

THIS chapter which breathes forth the very soul of gospel invitation and entreaty is logically connected with the two which



precedes it. The sufferings of Christ (chap. 53) making atonement for sin, really provide this gospel feast with its living waters—its wine, milk and bread of life—for the needy souls of men, while the joyful change that comes over Zion (chap. 54) breathes new life into her soul and rouses all her energies to enlarge her tent-room for new converts. Now all this presupposes that she addresses herself to the work of inviting and beseeching ruined men to come to her own crucified Savior for mercy. Hence this chapter is suggestive to the Savior's people of the work they have to do in filling up their tents and homes with the hungry who need the bread of life; "Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled." We may suppose also that the prophet's own soul is penetrated, filled and fired, with the glorious truths which he has been recording (chaps. 52-54), and now, seeing such provisions made for the salvation of lost men (chap. 53), and such gracious purposes of God revealed in respect to the enlargement of Zion by the conversion of vast nations (chap. 54), he cannot do less or otherwise than to break forth in these overflowings of entreaty and invitation. How the deep tides of his emotion surge and overflow under the power of this momentous and glorious truth—*salvation enough—free for all!* How he longs to see them come, in thronging hosts on hosts, to these abundant supplies of living bread and water! Hence he puts these words on record, both as the outgoings of his own heart and as suggestive to God's people of their mission to invite the perishing, and suggestive also to sinners themselves of the freeness and fullness of God's mercy and of his longing desire to see them returning, penitent, yet trustful, to his feet.

1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Waters, to represent spiritual blessings, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and moral cleansing, appear elsewhere in Isaiah; e. g. chaps. 12: 3, and 44: 3, and 55: 6, 7. Feasting on food at once delicious and nourishing, is only a slight modification of the same figure, as in chaps. 25: 6, and 62: 8, 9, and 65: 13. Our Lord resumes both these figures—that of water in John 4: 14, and 7: 37; that of feasting in various parables, e. g., Matt. 22: 1-10, and Luke 14: 15-24, and also in his representation of his own flesh as the bread of life (John 6: 32-58). The central idea is, the best and most needful things for the body made the symbols of the best and most vital blessings for the soul. The abundance and freeness of the former represent the yet richer abundance and freeness of the latter.—"Coming without money," and especially "buying without money," as if whoever should come, however penniless, would surely obtain and might almost claim as if he had actually bought.

are designed to represent strongly that the most empty-handed and the most utterly undeserving are specially invited, and made surely welcome.

2. Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which* is not bread? and your labor for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which* is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

As man's body must have bread, so his soul must crave good. Why should the wicked seek it where it is *not*, and lavish their money for what will prove only ruinous?—"No-bread" as here used is a compound word, like "no-wood" in chap. 10 : 15, and "no-God" and "no-spirit" in chap. 31 : 3, meaning the opposite of bread, *i. e.*, poison, whatever is not life-sustaining but life-destroying. The "*no*" prefixed carries the sense beyond the mere negation of bread, over to the opposite idea. See notes on Isaiah 10 : 15.—The same sense should probably be given to the next and parallel clause, "that which satisfieth not," *i. e.*, which so far from affording rational satisfaction, only torments with insatiable desire and harrows the soul with keenest agony.—Instead of doing that do rather this; Hearken; O hearken unto me, the repetition [in the original] expressing the earnestness of the call.—"Fatness" represents the choicest spiritual good.

3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David.

Dropping figures drawn from the world of sense, the prophet speaks plainly of mind and of its work. "Incline your ear" to hear God's words; "Come unto me" in the earnest seeking of my face; "hear" not only with mental attention, but with your will and heart in accord, yielding to God's will obediently and submissively; *so shall your soul live!* This living is God's favor which is life; such living as men might call "*real life*;" that joyful peace in God which comes with pardon and the entire submission of our will to his.—"Make an everlasting covenant with you" constitutes permanent relations between God and men; God on his part becoming their Father and Friend, their refuge and portion; they on their part engaging in like manner to be his people in humble trust and true obedience.—The explanatory clause added here ("Even the sure mercies of David") means; Even according to and including those blessings which I promised so surely to David, and of which the Messiah was the great central element. The account of this covenant may be seen in 2 Sam. 7 : 12-29, and 1 Chron. 17 : 7-27; restated

substantially in Ps. 89 : 1-4, 19-37, and referred to 2 Sam. 23 : 1-5. These passages show that in this covenant with David the chief points were, A great king in his line to whom God would sustain very special relations and who can be no other than the Messiah ; a covenant affirmed repeatedly to be "everlasting," and embracing mercies that were *sure* as the faithfulness of Jehovah. David's own "last words" include this emphatic allusion to it : "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*" (2 Sam. 23 : 5). Hence the pertinence of these words of our prophet ; "Even the sure mercies of David," *i. e.*, promised to David.

4. Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Who is "*him*?" The nearest antecedent is David, yet the course of thought and the description of him as "a witness to the people," *i. e.*, to the Gentile nations, and a "leader and commander to the people," require us to refer it to the Messiah. Nor is this reference in any wise violent for the promises and covenant referred to are full of the Messiah, and indeed he is more than once in prophecy called "David," that king having been in some respects his representative and type as the religious head of God's people. See Ezek. 34 : 23, 24, and Hosea 3 : 5.—The word "witness" contemplates the Messiah as testifying to the great truths of God, revealing them and confirming them as true, even as he said of himself before Pilate ; "I am a king," and my empire is that of truth. "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," and so proves himself to be one of my subjects (John 18 : 37).—This descriptive term appears among the attributes of the Messiah in Rev. 1 : 5, and 3 : 14 ; "Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness ;" "the faithful and true Witness." The same thought in other phrase appears in Isaiah 42 : 1, 3, 4, 6, and 49 : 6, 8. "The Messiah shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles ;" "shall bring forth judgment unto truth ;" "shall be for a light to the Gentiles," etc.—"A Leader and Commander to the people," *i. e.*, spiritually, the King of the Gentile nations, going before them and at their head as the military commander at the head of his army. See the same idea (chap. 52 : 12), with notes there. Under his rule the nations shall learn the truth of God and find the blessedness of his salvation.

5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel ; for he hath glorified thee.

The Messiah spoken of in v. 4 is here spoken to. Some of the expressions in this verse seem to contemplate his church and people, yet by no means excluding himself.—The word rendered “nation” and “nations” means almost invariably the Gentiles. Thou shalt call into thy kingdom the Gentiles who have never been known in this kingdom before, nor have they known thee. They shall come with eager haste and earnest heart [“run”] unto thee, because God has given them to thee and calls them with his effective voice. He has exalted his well beloved Son to infinite glory, and therefore gives thee this glorious reward. The New Testament has the same view of the glory given by the Father to the Son (John 17 : 1, 5, and 7 : 39, and 12 : 16, and Acts 3 : 13).—The accession of the Gentiles to the church is appropriately made prominent in this chapter of gospel promise.

6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

“*Seek the Lord,*” is too simple and expressive to be improved by any paraphrase or explanation. It implies that the sinner addressed has lost God in the sense of losing his favor and his personally manifested presence; is an alien and godless as Paul truly represents his case (Eph. 2 : 12).—The call to “seek the Lord while yet he may be found” irresistibly implies that this time is limited and may be very short. This day of hope and possible mercy has an end. Let the sinner seize and make the most of it while yet its light waits upon him for this very purpose. The same motive, based on the fearful contingency that this day of mercy can not last long, appears in Zeph. 2 : 1–3. See notes on that passage.—“Calling on the Lord *while* he is near,” suggests that ere long he may be too far away to hear your call. So the blind man called after the Son of David while he was yet passing by and within hearing; “Jesus, have mercy on me!”—“Let the wicked forsake his way,” his evil course of life, and “his thoughts,” his purposes, wrong objects of pursuit, his selfish and sinful aims and plans of life; the two phrases being designed to include all that pertains both to the outer and the inner life of man. He must make his heart right and his outer life right also; not his heart only, but his life; not his life only, but his heart no less.—The word rendered “thoughts” means not merely or primarily, opinions, views of things; but the moral purposes, the chosen objects

which one lives for; the preferences, determinations which control all his subordinate activities.—The grand inducement named here to urge sinners to seek God thus is the assurance of God's mercy in his free and abundant pardon. So returning to God, O sinner, "he will have mercy upon you." How sure, and O how precious! Let it melt and bow every heart! Never let unbelief gainsay, or pride repel it!

8. For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word "for" logically connects v. 8 with vs. 6, 7. But what the precise point of this connection is has been variously understood. The choice lies between these two views; the first relating directly to the former part of v. 7—the duty enjoined, thus: Let the wicked forsake his ways and thoughts, because they are morally so unlike God's, morally so far below his. Let him know that there can be no peace and no reconciliation between himself and God so long as he follows such evil ways and thoughts, while God's ways and thoughts are so unlike his—so pure and good, over against his, so impure and vile.—There is prodigious force of truth in this logic, whether it be the very logic of this connection or not.—The second view connects v. 8 with the latter part of v. 7, appending it to sustain the declaration, "*God will have mercy;*" "*God will abundantly pardon.*" That is, it supposes that God's thoughts and ways are here put in contrast with man's in the special point of his rich mercy and readiness to forgive, with design to overcome the repellencies of unbelief and conscious guilt in the sinner's heart. The Lord may be supposed to say thus; "I know the heart of guilty man; I know how prone he is to say, Such sins as mine can never be forgiven; the pure and just God can never have mercy on a sinner so guilty as I." Therefore God enriches and intensifies his promise of mercy, saying, Judge not my mercy by your own, nor my readiness to pardon by yours. My ways of mercy are indefinitely more vast and glorious than those of mortals; my thoughts of compassion and love are infinitely richer than yours. The difference between mine and yours can be measured by no line less than that which labors to compass infinity, spanning the height of the heavens above the earth.—This second view has in its favor, not that it is more true than the first, for both are entirely true, and are most precious and glorious truths; but (1.) That it refers to the nearest antecedent, *i. e.*, to the last thought in v. 7, and not to the first; and (2.) That it harmonizes better with the subsequent context, as we shall see.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

The translation here is slightly improved by following the original more closely, thus; "For as the rain or the snow *will* come" (*i. e.*, will continue long as the world stands to come) "down from heaven, and will not return thither until it shall have watered the earth and shall have made it bring forth and bud, and shall have given (*i. e.*, the rain; not the 'earth' shall have given) seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so my word which shall go forth from my mouth shall not return empty, nor until it shall have accomplished what I have pleased, and shall have effectually done what I have sent it to do." Here God's word, compared to the descending, fertilizing rain, admits of two possible applications, *i. e.*, either to his gospel promises with reference to their sure fulfillment; or to his gospel truth in general with reference to its moral power in renewing human hearts and regenerating the moral face of the world. These two views are quite distinguishable, and the figure might apply to either; yet in the present case the latter is so involved in the former—the entire mission of gospel truth as an element of moral power among the nations being so fully and precisely a thing of promise and prophecy as seen by Isaiah, we may well suppose them both to be blended and involved in these verses. I do not see that either can be legitimately excluded. God's word of promise is to be fulfilled, and indeed in precisely this mission of his word of truth which shall go forth and fall upon the face of the earth as the rain falls from heaven, and like it shall be gloriously fertilizing and renovating till it has richly furnished seed for the sower and bread for the eater, and made this sin-cursed earth a second Eden. Moreover, applied to the power of divine truth, the figure is exquisitely pertinent; the moral results of his word like the physical results of his rain. —Now as to the logical connection of these verses with the preceding, it may be supposed that the conception of the heavens as high above the earth may have suggested the rain and the snow that come down from the heavens; bringing health, fertility and verdure. But the real connection of thought lies deeper than the poetic association that suggested the figure. It comes in here as a proof of God's great thoughts of mercy that he has purposed to send abroad his gospel word, bearing salvation to

the wide world. Ye may know (he would say) that my thoughts of mercy are high as the heavens from the fact that I am to send forth my word of gospel truth as I send down the rain and snow from heaven, and it shall not come back to me till it shall have renovated the face of the earth and filled it with the knowledge of God as the waters fill the seas. Such I take to be the logic of this admirably rich passage.—The reader will see that these verses (10, 11) assume that vs. 8, 9 affirm God's mercy to be great above man's, rather than that his moral nature is unlike man's: the former bearing inspirations of hope to the sinner's despairing soul; the latter appealing to the moral necessity of a change of heart. While both are altogether true, the former is supported here by the prominence given to the greatness of God's mercy and to his positive purpose to make his salvation effective.

12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

The phraseology, "Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace," comes from the Exodus out of Egypt, but its meaning here is that the church shall go forth joyfully to the conquest of the world for Immanuel. The prophet's thought is still of the same great theme which has been present through not only this chapter, but in its various bearings through chapters 52-54 as well. The people of God pass out from under the restrictions and limitations of the Mosaic age, emerging from its comparative darkness and imbecility; and move upon the nations, open now to their gospel mission. It is a joyful work: the mountains and the hills break forth before them into singing; the forest trees clap their hands in glad applause and exultant praise to their Creator. All nature seems conscious of the blessedness of this moral transformation, the glory of which is that men shall know the Lord and turn from their sinning to a holy life.—Another figure conceives of the thorns and briers that came upon the earth, the curse for man's fall (Gen. 3: 17-19), as now giving way to growths alike beautiful and useful. "And this shall be to the Lord for a name," *i. e.*, for renown and for glory, a sign and proof of his enduring and surpassing love. This stupendous change will be the memorial of his loving kindness to our lost race, to stand forever before the hierarchies of heaven as the measure and monument of divine compassion and unutterable love.

Thus closes one of the most grand and sublime strains of prophecy (chaps 52-55) that ever passed through human lips. It is the gospel age seen with its final issues on earth outspread in prophetic vision; its suffering yet glorified Redeemer; God's love to Zion and his assurances of restoring mercy; the gospel call, coupled with God's gracious purpose and pledge of its efficiency in making this sin-cursed earth again a paradise of moral purity and beauty. — Yet this is not the real heaven reached through death, nor a glorified state on earth reached through the resurrection of the body and the personal presence of Christ; but is precisely the gospel age of our world in its ripened fruits of gospel truth made effective through the divine Spirit, culminating in glorious power unto the salvation of men and the purity of Zion.



## CHAPTER LVI.

FROM a course of thought which had borne the prophet fully into the gospel age, he here falls back to a point shortly before its introduction, whence he sees it near at hand (v. 1), and exhorts those who truly fear God to diligence in their worship and service; encourages foreigners with the assurance that, coming with sincere heart, they will be welcome in the house and church of God and will be gathered with his people (vs. 2-8). Then turning to the apostate, incorrigible portion of the Jews, he predicts their destruction (v. 9), and specially describes their religious leaders and teachers as being fearfully corrupt and corrupting (vs. 10-12).

1. Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

To "keep judgment" is to recognize the claims of intrinsic justice and equity and to practice accordingly. At what time God's salvation is near this is specially incumbent on men as a preparation for receiving his blessings. Those who truly feared God in the ages before Christ came, could not in any way better prepare themselves to ensure the blessings of his advent than by diligently walking with God in all judgment and righteousness in the letter and spirit of that dispensation. Simeon and Anna, Zacharias and Elizabeth, waiting at the temple, faithful in every religious observance under the Mosaic law; "righteous before God and walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1: 6), were happy examples of obedience to the precepts of this verse, and fine illustrations of what the prophet means by putting one's self in readiness for Christ's coming.



2. Blessed is the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

The "son of man" is simply parallel with "man." "Layeth hold on it," i. e., with earnest, vigorous grasp as one fully determined to meet every moral duty and at all events to please God. —Remarkably, keeping the Sabbath sacred is put here in one clause, and in its parallel clause, withholding the hand from every moral evil, as if the observance of the Sabbath were designed to comprehend or represent all religious observances, the entire external worship of God. This prominence given to the Sabbath must certainly imply that God holds its observance in specially high esteem, and that he intends it shall be a perpetual, and not a merely Jewish and transient institution. This high appreciation of the Sabbath and solemn purpose to make it perpetual rested on substantial grounds, the Sabbath being the grand public recognition of his creatorship; a sign and seal also of special covenant relation with Jehovah as the God of his people—"that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex 31: 13). Moreover it had a vital utility as a reservation of time from other intruding and preventing avocations, for the unbroken study of God in his word and ordinances, and for his worship, both public and private. The Sabbath considered as "made for man" was the fruit of consummate wisdom and of true love to man's best interests. Let us be grateful to God that he gave it to our race in their infancy and made it binding through all time, a fountain of unmeasured, priceless blessings to all who diligently observe it.

3. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself unto the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

The son of the stranger is any foreigner, not of Jewish birth. If he is willing to join himself as a proselyte to God's people, let him not say or think that he and his class are walled out from communion and fellowship in the church. By no means. The door of admission is to be set fully open and every middle wall of partition is to come down.—Probably the eunuch is specially referred to because specially excluded by Mosaic statute "from the congregation of the Lord." See Deut. 23. 1, where he stands first among the excluded classes and therefore fitly represents those classes here. The Lord therefore implies that all the restrictions and limitations of the Mosaic system are in the Christian age abolished, and all men of whatever race and of whatever personal characteristics are made alike welcome.—"Behold, I am a dry tree," childless (this being the oriental sense of this pro-

verbial expression), and therefore held in the lowest esteem. Compare the phrase, "a root out of dry ground" (chap. 53: 2). Although the eunuch was held of small account in the light of those peculiar oriental ideas which attached high honor to the heads of large families, yet let him not feel that no breath of gospel love can reach him. God has some special words of gospel promise for him as a representative man. The broad, deep bosom of divine compassion makes a home for the outcast and forlorn. The genius of Christianity opens its arms to embrace the most abject, desolate and friendless.

4. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

5. Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

If this representative class, outcasts from human sympathy, will only keep my Sabbaths, choose what pleases me, and take firm hold of my covenant, in all honesty and diligence obeying my precepts, I will give them in my house a better place and higher honor than that of mere sons and daughters. This reminds us of Christ's doctrine—publicans and harlots if thoroughly penitent—before Jewish-born children (Matt. 21: 31). And again, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward *his disciples* and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12: 46–50).—"In mine house and within my walls," cannot be restricted to the ancient temple though the language adapts itself to the old economy and refers to the exclusion of this class from that temple. But this is Jewish costume, the meaning here being, They shall be at home in the Christian church and in their spiritual communion with God.—The Hebrew word for "place," joined with "name," means properly, "hand," but is used of Absalom's pillar which he called after his own name and which passed currently under the designation, "Absalom's *hand*" ["place"]. To have a hand there in God's house and within his walls might naturally in our English idiom mean, a work to do there, a sphere for one's free activities. "Hand," is a Hebrew emblem for power, but I am not aware that it is used in the sense of *work*, a sphere for exertion.—Gesenius thinks the word refers to the uplifted hand and arm which is found on many ancient sepulchral monuments.—The general sense of the passage is made entirely clear by the context.

6. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the

LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

"Strangers," of Gentile birth, are here made welcome under the gospel reign to God's house of prayer and to his temple and altar. Naturally this costume is Jewish. "The holy mountain," "my house of prayer," "burnt offerings and sacrifices upon mine altar;" all come from the Jewish age. Yet their real significance belongs to the gospel age and pledges to Gentiles as to Jews equal privileges of acceptable worship and of filial relationship to God. The prophecy anticipates that great truth which broke in slowly upon the dark minds of the Christian brotherhood soon after the day of the Great Pentecost; "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him" (Acts 10: 34, 35).—In the phrase, "my house shall be *called* a house of prayer," we must give "shall be called," the sense of Isaiah's idiom—*shall truly be*—shall be so called because it shall really be so. "All people," purposely opens the door to all Gentiles.—Our Lord quotes this passage in part, and with special emphasis on the word *prayer*, not on the clause, "for all people." Christ meant, my house shall be for *prayer* and not for *traffic*; but the antithesis of the prophet is rather, for all people, and not for Jews only.—The broad scope of the passage promises divine welcome and audience to the truly obedient of every race and of all conditions, in harmony with those precious words of Malachi; "For, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in *every place* incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 1: 11).

8. The LORD GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, besides those that are gathered unto him.

He who gathers the outcasts of Israel to himself will also gather the outcast Gentiles as well. Would he not herein signify his special pleasure in gathering outcast ones—those who are ostracized by the pride or selfishness of man, but are for that reason only the more welcome to the compassionate sympathy of the Infinite Father?

9. All ye beasts of the field come to devour, say all ye beasts in the forest.

This ancient image of subject from gospel promise made to sinners, sinners, and men deemed righteous, is the announcement of Jehovah from upon a class whose watchmen are blind and whose shepherds are ignorant, sensual and selfish, can be accounted for only upon the supposition that the prophet has a message to two classes who are morally the antipodes of each other: the one class honestly fearing and seeking God; the other, ignorant, judicially blinded, and near the point of being rejected of God as non-existent. These two classes constituted the nominally Jewish community in the age preceding the Savior's advent and at that time. Here therefore he turns from the truthful and hopeful to the vile and the hopeless. The latter are first denounced v. 9, and then described vs. 10-13.—According to the common usage of Isaiah the command, "come to devour," is equivalent to a prediction: This guilty people shall be devoured. The nominal people of God being thought of as his flock, now to be destroyed for their guilty apostasy; beasts of the field and the forest are the appropriate agents under God for their destruction. The same figure appears Ezek. 34: 5-8, and in part in Jer. 12: 9.

10. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they can not bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

"His watchmen" are those of the people, i. e., of the sheep who are to be devoured. "Watchman" is another term for "shepherd," referring here to the religious teachers of the Lord's people; Scribes, Pharisees, doctors of the law, and at an earlier age, the false prophets and corrupt priests. They are blind, mentally and spiritually—a fact to which Isaiah repeatedly refers. They will not study, appreciate and love the truth respecting God, and therefore they see but little, and nothing to any practical purpose. They are really ignorant, and what they know lies powerless in their hardened heart. They are to the people what dumb, dull, yet voracious dogs would be for the use of the shepherd. He keeps and trains dogs to watch the flock and to bark as the signal of danger, and not to doze and while life away in sleep and gluttony.

11. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that can not understand: they all look to their own way every one for his gain, from his quarter.

12. Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, *and much more abundant*.

The description drops the figure of the dog after the first clause, and speaks of the same religious leaders as themselves shepherds who are void of just understanding; supremely selfish; fearfully, disgustingly sensual; given to strong drink, and spending the live-long night, and even the next day in the long protracted debaucheries of beastly intoxication.—“*Looking to their own way,*” is precisely; They *turn* themselves to their own way, which is further explained as being “each one for his own gain,” the word for “gain” usually signifying wealth, profit. The last verse describes them by giving their own words. “Fill ourselves with strong drink,” translates Hebrew words which imply real intoxication, beastly drunkenness.—The last clause has been assumed by some to mean that time will move on to-morrow as to-day with no calamity, no pending, forth-breaking judgments. Words with this sense might have been put into their lips truthfully, but these words seem rather to mean, “Let our revelings hold on into and through to-morrow, and let us have a good time, “much more abundant.” “Let *our* to-morrow be spent as this day, only more so.”—This life-sketch of the corrupt religious teachers of the Jews is endorsed substantially by Ezekiel (chap. 34), and by Jeremiah (chap. 23: 1-4), and by Zech. (chap. 11), and by Malachi (chap. 1 and 2). It amply accounts both for their inveterate hostility to the Lord Jesus when he came among them, and for the extreme apostasy and degeneracy of the masses of the people. The influence of corrupt religious teachers must of necessity be pernicious in the highest degree. It is sickening to think of the scandal they bring upon religion and of their power of terrible repellency to drive men away from religion and from all possibility of salvation.—This description should warn all preachers of the gospel against even the least approach in habits and much more *in heart* toward such a life. How holy and blameless should those men be who are called forth to represent the pure and lovely Savior, and to testify to the purity of his life and to the glory of his gospel! Especially, how should they abstain from all appearance of evil and from all approximation toward evil in the matter of using strong drink! I can not imagine how a true minister of Jesus Christ can think of doing any thing adapted to countenance drunken revelry, without shuddering! Does he consider how surely every wicked, unprincipled man will say, “If the preacher drinks, so and much more may I?”

## CHAPTER LVII.

THE case of the corrupt portion of God's ancient people is the theme through the greater part of this chapter, which therefore stands in close connection with vs. 9-12 of the chapter previous.—From the judgments which fall on the wicked the righteous are removed by a peaceful death and go to their rest (vs. 1, 2); wicked men contemning the righteous, are themselves really worthy of contempt (vs. 3, 4); their idolatry is put in literal terms (vs. 5, 6); and then in figurative (vs. 7-9). They had persisted in their sin the more fearlessly because God had been extremely forbearing (vs. 10-12); but judgments must come and test the value of their helpers (v. 13). The trustful in God shall find help in him through his great condescension and mercy (vs. 13-19); but only unrest and sorrow will be the lot of the wicked (vs. 20, 21).

1. The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart: and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.

2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking in his uprightness.

The word "perish" is often applied to the death of the wicked, but in a sense far unlike this. The context shows that the righteous, perishing, are not lost to themselves nor to happiness, for they "enter into peace" and rest sweetly in their repose in the grave. In fact the very point made is that when they die, the ungodly never appreciate the extraordinary peculiarity of their case; never consider that the righteous die not as a punishment upon themselves, and that their death is in no sense an evil to themselves, but on the contrary, a good *since it takes them away from the face of impending evil*. What time God is about to send destructive judgments on the wicked, he takes away the righteous from the midst of them so that he need not slay the

righteous with the wicked. Righteous Lot must be called out of guilty Sodom before the fires of heaven fall on that city.—The last clause of v. 2 is specially expressive, being added apparently as an after-thought lest some wicked man should apply to himself the words just spoken, "They shall rest in their beds." But "mind ye" (the prophet would say), "only he who walked in uprightness." This is literally; "the man walking straight-forward," in the moral sense.—The passage shows conclusively that the prophets of Isaiah's age knew of an after life of blessedness for the righteous, but for the righteous only. It is marvelous that any Bible critic should dare to deny their possession of this knowledge. See notes on chap. 26: 14-19.

3. But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, *and* draw out the tongue? *are* ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood?

The speaker turns suddenly to accost the wicked. The English version fails to do full justice to the force of this transition. The Hebrew reads literally; "And *you*—draw ye near hither; the word "you" being made emphatic. The idea is, come and let us debate this matter with you and, put your conduct before you in its true light. Probably they are described as the sons of sorcerers and children of harlots to indicate that their origin gave them no ground to despise good men, and that they are of a corrupt race and vile parentage.—V. 4 means, "Of whom do ye make sport" in the way of scorning and reproach? Against whom do ye "*make up mouths*," in mockery? Are not ye yourselves far more contemptible than those you condemn? —To show this yet more clearly, he proceeds to describe their idolatrous habits, than which nothing could be more worthy of contempt.

5. Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks?

6. Among the smooth *stones* of the stream is thy portion; they, they *are* thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

The translation, "with idols," is not so well sustained as the English margin; "Among the oaks." The Hebrew word favors the latter sense. The thought is not directly of idol worship,

but of one of its adjuncts—prostitution. “Inflaming yourselves,” enkindling your libidinous passions among the oaks, and indeed under every green tree. Orgies of lust and of blood go together; so the next point in the outline is the murder of children, burning them to death in honor of Moloch and Saturn—a thing often done in the valley of Hinnom and in the clefts of the rocks. The Scriptures repeatedly charge the commission of this horrible crime. See Ezek. 16: 21. and 23: 39.—There is no doubt that v. 6 refers to objects of idolatrous worship; yet commentators differ as to the precise sense of the word rendered “smooth stones.” The point has only minor importance. I concur in the sense of the English version, “smooth stones;” understanding by it, however, not the worn and rounded pebbles found in abundance in running water, but stones polished by art or made smooth with oil. The reader will remember the account twice recorded (Gen. 28: 18, and 35: 14) of Jacob’s setting up a stone for a pillar and pouring oil on the top of it. Idolaters were wont to copy the rites and usages of God’s true worshippers, perverting them into idol worship. Probably among other rites they also borrowed this.—The word for “stream” denotes a valley or ravine in which water flowed only in the rainy season, and which was dry most of the year. In such ravines, the people often located their idols and practiced the usages of idol worship.—“*They*,” “*they*”—emphatic because the Hebrew pronoun is expressed and doubly so for its repetition, implies plainly that the precise objects of their idolatrous worship had been brought before the mind under the word rendered “smooth stones”—a circumstance which sets aside some of the interpretations put upon that word. The pouring out of meat and drink offerings upon them or to them, corresponds with what is said of Jacob.—Can ye suppose that God will enjoy or even endure such things? The Lord says, Shall I comfort myself in these things? Or shall I not rather “ease myself” by inflicting fearful vengeance on such idolaters? The word used admits this twofold sense, and was probably chosen purposely to convey it. Precisely the same expression occurs (chap. 1: 24), “Aha, I will ease me of mine adversaries,” etc.

7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee *a covenant* with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest *it*.

The places chosen for idol worship were either valleys, shaded



dells, or lofty hills, especially those with wooded tops—groves. It was always Satan's policy to invest his localities with the utmost sensual attractions. Scenery and shade; music and dancing; feasting and wine; social life in its intensest forms (to say nothing of the baser passions), all were subsidized to lend their aid to entice men away from God into idol worship and sin.—As to precise significance, these verses *say* prostitution and harlotry, but seem to *mean* primarily idolatry and its surroundings. The whole nation being in the marriage covenant with God, idolatry was precisely spiritual adultery—playing the harlot as to God, their Maker and their Husband. Hence the phrases, "Set up thy bed;" "discovered" [exposed] "thyself to another than me;" "enlarged thy bed," to admit troops of other lovers (idols), in flagrant violation of their covenant with God.—In the last clause, the English margin gives the probable sense of the original: "Thou providest room, *i. e.*, for those who were implicated in thine adulteries."—In the first clause of v. 8 "thy remembrance" means, *thy memorial*; things that well represent thy spirit and keep in remembrance thy deeds; probably the insignia of idol worship; perhaps household gods. In every corner of thy house are seen the witnesses of thy shameless idolatry.

9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase *thyself even* unto hell.

Some apply this language directly to idol worship, taking the word rendered "king" to mean Moloch, from which it differs only in its vowels. Others, better, suppose a reference to efforts to secure foreign alliances. These alliances were closely related to idolatry both because they involved apostasy from the true God to other nations and to their idol gods for help, and because they naturally opened the door for introducing among themselves the gods of other nations. Very probably this language alludes definitely to some particular case which at this distance of time we are unable to identify absolutely. The Hebrew, like the English version, has it "*the king*" as if the allusion were not general but specific.—Hosea (12: 1) states that in the movement for alliance with Egypt, oil was carried thither, *i. e.*, as a present, to ingratiate their good will. "Perfumery" was multiplied for the same purpose. These products, indigenous to Palestine and Arabia, and valued highly in Egypt, appear in the list of articles borne by the caravan from Gilead which took Joseph down into Egypt; "Spicery, balm, and myrrh (Gen. 37: 25); also in the present sent by Jacob in the hand of his sons (43: 11); "the best fruits of the land; balm, honey, spices and myrrh." Hence this passage probably refers to an alliance with Egypt.—"Debase thyself even unto hell," is strong, but not too strong to represent the voluntary debasement and degradation submitted to by the Jews in forsaking the Infinite and all-

glorious God to seek help from a people whose highest object of veneration was a calf!

10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

The word rendered "wearied" means (1) to toil hard; and (2) to be weary. Hence the meaning here may be, Thou hast toiled hard in this long journey; a costly business it has been to thee, this sending to other kingdoms for help; yet thou hast been persistently persevering, never discouraged, never saying, No hope in this line! Thou hast found means still to live though at the cost of much labor [which the word "hand" naturally implies]; therefore thou hast not been conscious of thy real weakness. This is plainly the sense of the last verb, translated "grieved." The word means, to be wasted away as with pining sickness. Samson uses it (Judges 16: 7, 11, 17) in the sense of becoming weak as another man. They had not yet felt their intrinsic weakness so as to be driven back to their God for help.

11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

The general idea of this verse may be expressed in this paraphrase: What is Assyria that thou shouldst be afraid of her and so lose faith in me and prove false to thy covenant with me ["hast lied"], and hast not remembered how often I have saved thee from thy most powerful foes? Is it not because I have long held my peace, restraining myself from punishing thy great sins, that thou hast now no wholesome fear of me?—On the supposition that the specific case in the prophet's eye was that of seeking aid from Egypt against Assyria [given in detail, chapter 28], this paraphrase names the parties (we may presume) with historic truthfulness. On any supposition, it illustrates the sentiment—"Held my peace," here as in chaps. 64: 12, and 65: 6, and 42: 14, conceives of the Lord as restraining himself long, notwithstanding the provocations of the wicked.

12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

This language seems ironical, in as much as her righteousness was only outrageous iniquity. The sentiment is, Thy righteousness, such as it is, I will set plainly before thee, a righteousness that shall profit thee nothing, but shall only bring a curse upon thy guilty head.

13. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee;

but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

"Thy companies," probably in the sense of all those things which thou hast *gathered* together to rely upon in case of danger: idol gods, foreign troops, and whatever else she might have. The original word means, things accumulated.—When thou criest out in the panic of appalling fear, then let thy foreign gods, troops, and all other helpers whatsoever, rush to thy help. All will be in vain, for the wind shall bear them all away, yea a breath [vanity] shall take them. They fly like chaff before the whirlwind.—But mark the contrast. He who puts his trust in me shall have Canaan for his inheritance and my holy mountain for his home and possession. These expressions bear a wealth of precious meaning. Consider how the pilgrim travelers, forty years in the wilderness, learned the significance of possessing the land of promise, and how it became to them an image of the heavenly country. Hence its current Hebrew usage. "To inherit the land" covers the richest blessings. Compare chaps. 60: 21, and 65: 9, 10. Deut. 4: 21, 22. Psalms 37: 11, and 69: 35, 36. Matt. 5: 5, and Rev. 5: 10.

14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people.

The Hebrew fails to identify the speaker who says, "Cast ye up," etc. He may be, as in the English version, the man who putteth his trust in me; or the speaker may be left indefinite; some one, or they, collectively. The sentiment is, There shall be a call to clear the way for the true people of God to come out from among the wicked before divine judgments shall crush and exterminate them. Prophetically its outlook may be to that sifting process which severed the true Israel from the false before the final destruction of the nation by the Romans. Or, with a less specific application it may teach in general that God's true children are forewarned and will be providentially aided to come out from among the incorrigibly wicked before they meet their fearful doom. The phraseology corresponds to that of chaps. 40: 3, and 62: 10, and 35: 8.

15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

These are indeed sublime conceptions of the glorious God,

making eternity his dwelling place; exalted high above all creatures; rejoicing in the name "Holy" as best expressing his infinite purity and never sullied excellence; but representing him, though so high and holy, as yet condescending to dwell with the contrite and the lowly of earth for the special purpose of reviving their spirit and comforting their heart. The very structure of the passage seems intended to show the close and blessed relationship between the most exalted of heaven and the lowliest of earth—the one Great Supreme above, and those who account themselves the least and unworthiest of all below.—How marvelous this condescension! It is not that God stoops down to commune with kings and princes, and to span the breadth between his throne in heaven and human thrones on earth; but that he comes down to the lowly, to those who have abjured all human pride and think of themselves only as very vile. This witnesseth that God is very near to the humble. "The Lord is nigh them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34: 18). In another passage the psalmist combines both what is expressed here as to the humble, and what is implied of the proud, saying, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off" (Psalms 138: 6).—It should be noted that in this passage the prophet assigns a reason why God will bless those who humbly trust in him. So the first word "*for*" indicates. His people may trust him none the less because he is the High and Exalted One, inhabiting eternity, rejoicing in the name "Holy," *for*, though so high, and withal so pure, yet he dwells with the humble and lowly none the less for this, but rather the more surely and the more graciously. Compassion toward the humble and broken-hearted is by no means alien and foreign to his infinitely pure heart, but is an outflow of that blessed purity and that infinitude of excellence.—O who shall not be charmed into love and adoration of God in the presence of such ineffably glorious condescension and goodness! Who will not aspire to be lowly and crave it as heaven's best boon to have a broken and a contrite spirit, seeing one's own sin in its true light in order to abhor it and loathing one's self in view of it as a prerequisite to heart-purity and to God's indwelling presence!—Passages of kindred sentiment and spirit occur chaps. 66: 1, 2, and 63: 15, and Psalms 22: 3, and 113: 4-6.

16. For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

The great mercy and compassion of God toward his people are manifested especially in his corrective discipline. He is constrained to "contend" with them in stern displeasure, rebuking them for their iniquity; yet even then, his great compassion sets the shortest limit possible. "He will not contend forever," "for he

knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust." He takes it into account that no human soul can long endure under his rebuke.—The "souls which I have made," is more close to the sense of the Hebrew if read, The *breaths* which I have made; man in all his strength being only as a breath before an offended God. The psalmist has the same thought (78: 38, 39); "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not, yea, many a time turned he his anger away and did not stir up all his wrath, for he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." Also (Psalms 103: 9, 14), "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

Covetousness being the only sin specified here, some critics assume that it must be taken in a very broad sense, even to include all those passions which crave inordinately any form of worldly good. But it should be borne in mind that the word of God accounts covetousness a prolific sin, not to say a mother of all sin, *e. g.*; "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6: 10): "I had not known lust except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet' (Rom. 7: 7).—The verb translated "smote," and also the word for "was wroth," are both in the future tense, signifying at least that God's displeasure continues into the future, and does not terminate either with the past or the present. The sentiments of the verse are that covetousness is a sin often fearfully prevalent; always most provoking to God; a sin for which he often chastises men, and yet one which his best efforts fail to cure.

18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

And yet the great mercy and all-conquering grace of God avail to save.—It is not absolutely clear whether the Lord refers here to the sinner's "ways" of sinning or to his "ways" of repentance. If the former, the promise is, I will nevertheless make my grace effective for his repentance and reclamation. If the latter, then the promise refers directly to pardon and moral cleansing. The close connection with his "way" in the verse previous favors the former construction, his ways of sinning. In this view the promise is rich, thus; Yet despite of such sin, I will surely heal him, bringing him to deep repentance.—"His mourners" are those who are broken in heart because of

their sin. The word "him" speaks of Israel collectively, and it seems to be implied that the people in general are humbled and mourning for their sins. To all such the Lord gives precious comforts.

19. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

The appropriate fruit of the lips is praise. God "creates" it by giving both the occasion and the heart for it.—As to the figure of "fruit" applied to the lips, see Heb. 13 : 15, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."—The connection of thought in our passage is that his wayward people when brought to repentance by his corrective discipline so as to be truly broken and humbled in spirit, will have their mouths filled with praise and will be blessed with double peace, both the Gentile afar off, and the Jew who is near. "Peace" comprehends all spiritual blessings.

20. But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it can not rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21. *There is no peace*, saith my God, to the wicked.

While the souls of the righteous rest in deep repose, trusting in their God forever, the wicked have no true peace at all. Forever restive, never satisfied with either themselves or God; grasping after good they can not attain, they are forcibly and fitly compared to the restless sea which can not be still, but its waters, perpetually driven and dashed on, cast up mire and dirt. The outcome of their restless motion, viz., the bringing up of mud and filth from the ocean's bottom, makes a new point of strong but just and telling analogy between the unsleeping waves and the sinner's passions. The lips of the righteous yield the sweet fruit of praise, but the eternal unrest of sinful passions brings up only things vile and profane, perhaps only cursing for praise, and blasphemy instead of devout adoration.—O to be a sinner, and never to know peace; to be a sinner, forever, unceasingly tossed like the waves of the sea;—what can be more appalling?



## CHAPTER LVIII.

THIS is a chapter on hypocrites, the special type or class be-

ing those who combine the apparently self-denying formalities of religion with the most self-indulgent and heartless oppression of their fellow-creatures. Since the Jewish nation as a whole professed to be the people of God, apostates in heart would often be hypocrites, keeping up the forms of religion after they had utterly lost its spirit, and indeed making special account of its forms as a means of obtaining God's favor—a cover to their sin and an indulgence for its more safe and free commission. Against such hypocrites, the stern rebukes of this chapter are thundered forth. The prophet is commanded to proclaim aloud to this class of people their sins; to set before them the very spirit of their ceremonial religion and of their oppressive life; to show them what religious worship is and what sort of life pleases God; and to promise them that, living so, their blessings should be unbounded.

1. Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

The Lord addresses his prophet, giving him his message and instructions.—“Cry from the throat” [Hebrew] in distinction from whispering out of the lips; speak with loud and earnest tones as one who is sent to a refractory or stupid people, and who will make himself heard. Earnestness and not vociferation is the spirit of this direction to the prophet. As applied to preachers of the gospel, this distinction is sensible and should not be lost sight of. Effectiveness should be studied. That style is best which is most effective, simply because the gospel preacher should speak for the sake of the best effect upon the hearers and for no other end. An earnest manner is always in order; but vociferation, when it degenerates into mere habit and ceases to be the voice of the heart, becomes annoying, not to say disgusting.—“Rebuke the sins of my professed people.” This message applied primarily to the Jews in the ages next preceding the coming of their Messiah, but is equally good for the same sort of people in every age.

2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

This verse describes them as professing to seek God and even as pretending to inquire after justice and righteousness—the very principles which they most of all outraged and trampled under foot in their oppressive ways of life.—The verbs which

express the action of these hypocrites are in the future tense. The verse may be paraphrased thus; And they will seek me day by day, and will delight to know the ways that please me, in manner and appearance like a nation which has wrought righteousness habitually (as they have not); and like a nation which has not departed from God's precepts of righteousness (as they have done). They will ask of me the ordinances of justice [without the least thought of doing them]; they manifest delight in drawing near to God, delighting in it however only because they hope by this means to gain from him a large indulgence for their sins.—There is special truth and point in representing these hypocrites as peculiarly zealous to learn of God the very duties which they are farthest from performing, the violation of which was the characteristic of their life. It helped to conceal from their own eyes their real wickedness. They doubtless hoped also by this means to conceal their oppressions from the eye of God! Oh, what stupidity!

3. Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

And now they complain of God that they do not get their pay for this laborious service. They have done it all *for pay*! In their heart they say, Why should we not have it? The Lord answers their inquiry.—The precise point of their question is not, Why have we fasted? but, Why hast thou not *seen our fasting*? Why are thou so blind to our very self-denying abstinence from food? This mode of stating the case is a Hebrew idiom.—“Afflicted our soul,” should rather be, afflicted *ourselves*, since their fasting was wholly an external thing, an affliction of the body and not a humbling of the soul.—God's answer is, In the very days of your fasting, ye are as oppressive and exacting as ever. Ye seek your own selfish pleasures on these days in which ye profess to be so religious toward me. In God's view their days of fasting should have been days of humiliation for those monstrous sins. But *they* meant no such thing. They only hoped to make these days a substitute for the duties of justice and kindness; an atonement for the sins of injustice and oppression—a substitution which God unutterably abhorred!

4. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this day*, to make your voice to be heard on high.

The first clause expands the sentiment with which v. 3 closed,



calling special attention to it; "Behold!" Do ye wish to know why God does not notice your fasting favorably, and why he seems not aware of your self-imposed inflictions? Here is the answer in full. Ye sin none the less for your fasting (v. 3), but even more (v. 4). Your fasting is toward strife and debate; tends to and unto "smiting with the fist of wickedness," with brutal violence.—The "fist of wickedness" tacitly refers to the law (Ex. 21: 18). "If men strive together, and one smite another with a stone or with his fist," etc. The sentiment is that these oppressors were even more savagely brutal on fast days than on any other; or perhaps in the broader sense, that these religious formalities paralyzed their conscience and made them more hardened and reckless in their cruelty toward their dependents than they would otherwise have been. "J. D. Michaelis tells a story of a lady who was never known to scold her servant so severely as on fast days, which he says agrees well with physiological principles and facts." [Alexander.] That is, abstinence rasped her nerves and made her more irritable; and then naturally her extra wrath fell on her servant.—The last clause I take to be not a prohibition; Ye *shall not*, must not, fast on this wise, lifting up your voice aloud in prayer, etc.; but a simple declaration, Ye *will not*, by such fasting as this, make your prayer reach heaven. Fasting like yours on these days will not carry your voice up to the pure throne above. The Hebrew negative prefixed to the verb "fast," is decisive against the former construction and for the latter. Unlike our English, the Hebrew language has one negative, *not*, to prefix to the imperative, and another to put before the indicative. The latter is used here. The former would have been used if the Lord had intended merely to prohibit such fasting. This phrase, therefore, asserts that their prayers, connected with such fasting, will avail them nothing. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66: 18)—and *ought not to*!

5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

Is *my* fast day like this of yours—mine, the day of my choice, being a day for a man to afflict and humble his *soul* and not his body merely? Is this the same thing as bowing down the head like a bulrush, and making one's bed of sackcloth and ashes? Will ye account the latter to be a real fast and a day acceptable to God?—The first point in the description of a fast, viz., afflicting the soul, applies to God's fast, and stands in contrast with their day, one for bowing the head low, not the soul, and laying the

body on sackcloth and ashes for a bed, but not prostrating the spirit in deep abasement: before God.

6. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ?*

If there were sinless beings in the universe, fasting and humiliation would have no pertinence and fitness for them. That is, the humiliation of fasting before God is *for sinners*, and is useful only as it humbles the heart for the very sins of which we are guilty, and most for those of which we are most guilty, and *produces radical reformation*. This is God's idea of a fast for oppressors, *viz.* a day for them to loosen bands wickedly imposed; to undo the burdens of the yoke [Hebrew]; to manumit—send forth free—the oppressed ones; and indeed, to “break every yoke.” The words in the last clause but one are precisely those of the Hebrew law for the manumission of servants; and must apply with tenfold force to the tenfold more atrocious and more unrighteous oppressions of American slavery.—And here none can refrain from raising the question, How is it possible that men with the Bible in their hands can believe themselves to be good Christians, observing fast days acceptably to God, while they persist in sustaining American slavery, a yoke beyond measure more oppressive, more unrighteous, and a more palpable and inevitable outrage on the rights of man than ever the servitude regulated under the Mosaic law could be?—Surely the righteous doctrines of this chapter afford themes for nominally Christian slaveholders to think of. I see not how any man, holding American slaves in the spirit of the system, can read it with mind and conscience awake, without finding in it God's denunciation of his life, and if he think himself religious, of his religion.—At the same time, let it escape no one's notice that this condemnation of oppression is very broad; “break every yoke.” No matter by what law, whether municipal, or merely social or even parental, any of our fellow-creatures fall in any measure under our power, let us see to it that our hand upon them becomes not a yoke; our authority, not a crushing bondage. The rebukes of God are not particular as to the form which oppression may assume.—Augustine has a comment on the relation of fasting to morality,\* of which this is the thought; “The grand and comprehensive idea of fasting is to abstain from the sins and illicit pleasures of the world. This is perfect fasting.” This fills out the description of the fast which God approves.

7. *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ?*

\* “Jejunium magnum et generale est abstinere ab iniquitatibus et illicitis voluptatibus seculi, quod est perfectum jejunium.”

when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?

"When thou seest the naked that thou cover him," is better read, "For thou *shalt* see the naked and then shalt cover him;"—a command to see his wants and then supply them, analogous to not hiding one's self, etc., in the parallel clause. Hiding one's self from a fellow-creature, is refusing to see and regard his wants.—The word "flesh" in the sense of a near relative is not uncommon with the Hebrews. See Laban to Jacob (Gen. 29: 14); "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh;" and (Gen. 37: 27) "For he (Joseph) is our bone and our flesh." The Scriptures throughout both the Old Testament and the New give great and deserved prominence to these duties of broad, deep, practical sympathy with the suffering and the friendless. See Isaiah 32: 6, and Job 31: 16-32, and Ezek. 18: 7, 8, and Prov. 22: 9, and Ps. 112: 9, and Matt. 25: 35, 36, and Rom. 12: 13, and Heb. 13: 2, 3, and James 2: 15, 16.

8. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

These blessings follow obedience. Those who will observe God's fast days and bring their life up to the spirit of them will have this reward.—"Light breaking forth as the morning," is a strong and exquisitely beautiful figure for happiness after misery.—The last half of the verse alludes to the symbols of God's presence in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and of fire; God before and God behind their moving hosts. "Thy righteousness" going before, may best be taken as the abstract for the concrete; thy righteous God, ever gracious to thee, will march before thee; corresponding to "the glory of God," the Shechinah, the symbol of his presence, going behind. The sentiment is, God shall be on every side of thee, thy never failing, ever present Guide and Protector. Compare 52: 12. The word "righteousness" is used (as a name for the Lord himself), Jer. 23: 6, and 33: 16, and 1 Cor. 1: 30.—Those who restrict this to the restoration from Babylon seem to overlook the fact that its terms and phrases are historic, drawn from the Exodus out of Egypt and the journeying through the wilderness, and that its application is therefore legitimately as broad as the necessities of God's people and as their fulfillment of its conditions. Alexander well says that, "although the promise might apply to the restoration from Babylon, yet that application no more exhausts the promise than the deliverance of Paul or Peter from imprisonment exhausted Christ's engagement to be with his servants always, even to the end of the world."

9. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I *am*. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke; the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

This answer to prayer is in contrast with the praying spoken of in v. 4 which could not reach God's lofty throne.—The putting forth of the finger is derisive, contemptuous. Judging from the language of the Arabs and also of the Latins, this must have been a common and well-known expression of derision. The Arabs have a verb derived from the word finger which denotes scornful ridicule, to "*finger* a man" meaning to express your scorn of him.—"Speaking vanity" is also to speak contemptuously. See Christ's allusion to such words, Matt. 5: 22. "*Raca*"—empty, vain fellow—corresponds to speaking vanity. All evil-speaking may be included but especially if scornful.

10. And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noonday:

In the first clause, Gesenius gives the word "soul" the sense of food because it sustains animal life, thus making this phrase directly parallel with satisfying the afflicted with bread. It is less harsh and far-fetched to say, If thou let the sympathies of thy heart pour out toward the hungry, and if thou satisfy the real wants of the afflicted whatever they may be, etc., then shall thy light rise (like the sun) upon the darkness, etc. Blessings of richest sort shall illumine thy soul and make thy life joyous.

11. And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

"Make fat thy bones," is strictly to renew their vigor, to reanimate thy physical frame with new vitality. The figures of the verse are plain, and rather specially common with Isaiah, and of course, are at once beautiful and richly expressive.

12. And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Thy posterity, or perhaps thy people without special reference to future generations, shall build up the places long waste and shall rear up walls and palaces, long time cast down to their very foundations, *i. e.*, so that nothing remained of them save their foundations. This is not precisely raising up *the* foundations, but raising up the building *from* its foundations—the previous destruc-

tion having left these but nothing else remaining.—“Shalt be called” in the sense of actuality; thou shalt be really a repairer of the breach, etc. “Paths to dwell in,” i. e., paths round about dwellings, in a thickly settled country. Thou shalt have the good things of earth; a restored community; the traces of desolation obliterated; prosperity smiling over the whole face of the land.

13. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own words* :

14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The Sabbath is specified here as in chap. 56: 2, 4, as one of the most prominent and vital of religious institutions and therefore a fit representative of them all.—The “foot” in relation to the Sabbath is thought of as treading it down in profanation and contempt. “Turning away the foot from the Sabbath,” is by no means turning the foot away from the house and the scenes of public worship, but turning it away from scenes of Sabbath desecration. The explanatory clause is, from doing thy own pleasure as opposed to doing God’s pleasure on that day.—The usage of the word “call,” so common in Isaiah, should be followed here, the sense being, not, If thou merely *call* the Sabbath a delight without its really being so; but if thou shalt make it so, and then call it so only because it *is* so. If thou shalt make the Sabbath thy delight, so esteeming and so regarding it, and if thou make the holy day of the Lord honorable, holding it in reverential honor; and so shalt honor God by faithfully observing his day, not doing thine own ways but his; not finding thine own pleasure but his, and not speaking words, i. e., vain words, idle words, such as are not in harmony with the spirit of the day, then shalt thou find delight in the Lord, far more happiness in keeping the Sabbath holy than is ever possible in its violation.—The phrase, “Riding upon the high places of the earth,” is first used by Moses (Deut. 32: 13, and 33: 29). It expresses a lofty style of enjoyment as of one borne in the sublime grandeur of royalty along the mountain tops of the land, enjoying the most exhilarating breezes in that half-tropical clime, feasting upon landscape beauties, high above the storms that play beneath the feet below—a prince among the kings of the earth.—“The heritage of Jacob” stands over against the deprivations of Esau and Ishmael. Jacob took the patriarchal benediction, and the great wealth of patriarchal promise. To this the prophet refers. Thou shalt be the heir to all that

wealth of promised good, for the mouth of the ever faithful and the unchangeable Jehovah, hath spoken it.—So God loves to crown obedience with most royal blessings. What a wealth of love fills his heart and loads his hands!



## CHAPTER LIX..

THE general apostasy of the covenant people developing itself in extreme immorality, at length arouses the long slumbering jealousy and justice of their God. He awakes to retrieve his honor and sustain his cause by extraordinary effusions of his Spirit, reclaiming some of his ancient people; gathering to himself and to them the Gentile nations; and making his word and his Spirit permanently effective for the interests of truth and salvation.—The Jews perish, not because the Lord's arm lacks power to save or his ear the quick perception of the cry of prayer, but because their sins have virtually sundered their relations to him as his people and have forbidden him to hear or save them in their distress.—With a pleasing and striking variety in his style the prophet describes the sins of the people, first in direct address to them vs. 2, 3; then by speaking of them, vs. 4–8; and finally, he classes himself with them as a common sufferer in the general calamity, vs. 9–13.

This chapter bears the same relation to the general subject of these later prophecies (chap. 40–66) as is borne by the passages, chaps. 42: 18–25, and 43: 22–28, and 50: 1, 2. The prophet can not speak of the great facts of the gospel age, *e. g.*, the Messiah's coming; the effusions of the Spirit, and the calling of the Gentiles; without occasionally taking notice of the ancient covenant people to show why they were in the main excluded from participation in those magnificent changes and unparalleled blessings. In this chapter, the notice of the covenant people gives prominence to their extreme and incorrigible degeneracy, in view of which, the Lord as one despairing of any help for his cause from them, rallies his energies for a new effort; relieves himself by visiting them with deserved retribution, and puts new life into his kingdom by the effusions of his Spirit to purify the converted remnant of the Jews and to impress the fear of his name and the power of his truth upon the Gentiles.

1. Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it can not save; neither his ear heavy that it can not hear:

2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

As usual the hand is the symbol of power. Its being "*shortened*" supposes it unable to reach his remote creatures for their relief. So the heavy or dull ear represents him as unable to hear to purpose. That God did not save his ancient people at the time referred to was due to no such cause, but only to their sins which interposed a vast moral distance between himself and them and practically turned his face away so that he could not hear.

3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

The general charge of great sin must now be substantiated. —For the greater force, the prophet represents every physical organ of their body—hands, fingers, lips and tongue—as actively engaged in sinning as if to show that every power of their being was pressed to its utmost capacity of wrong doing.

4. None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

The general sense of the first clause is clear. No one stands up manfully for justice and equity. But the precise significance of the words rendered, "None calleth for justice," has been given variously, *e. g.*, that none preach for it; or that none demand it in the community; or that none institute legal prosecutions in the spirit and for the ends of justice. It would not be extravagant to include all the available methods by which men in society may plead for, demand, and promote the ends of justice. The verb for "pleadeth" refers naturally to the official action of the officers of law in civil courts. They do not administer law in honesty and faithfulness.—The rest of the verse shows that society was rotten to the core; that craft, cunning, and fraud abounded.

5. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works *are* works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

One figure grows out of another. Having begun with the figure of "conceiving mischief" and "bringing forth iniquity," he next thinks of their eggs as hatching out into adders—the most venomous of reptiles; or as death to the eater; or if crushed under foot, lo, a viper springs to life.—Next, their plots are like the spider's woven web, which however in the outcome of his figure, is not so much a snare to catch insects as a garment under which to conceal their malicious purposes, which yet is an abortive endeavor.

7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

8. The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

"Running" and "making haste" even to murder the innocent, testify to their eagerness in sinning and to their absolute, reckless committal to unscrupulous crime.—The first two verbs in v. 7 are future; "Their feet *will* run to evil; they *will* hasten to shed innocent blood." They not only do now but will hereafter, which you may confidently predict from their present full, deliberate and determined purpose to persist in such sins.—Such men will neither have peace themselves, nor suffer others to enjoy it.—Paul (Rom. 3: 15–17) selects clauses from this chapter very appropriately to illustrate and confirm the universal and horrible depravity of mankind.

9. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.

In the passage beginning here, embracing at least vs. 9–13, the prophet classes himself with the sinning people, either from his sympathy with them under these great public calamities, or as one actually suffering under them in common with the whole people. The former is the more probable supposition.—This use of the first person plural therefore avails nothing toward proving that the writer was not the original Isaiah, but was some second or pseudo-Isaiah who lived near the close of the exile at Babylon. For, (1.) There is nothing in the passage to prove but much to disprove the theory that this chapter was written near the close of the exile and describes the state of morals at that time: and (2.) It is entirely legitimate for a prophet whose heart sympathizes warmly with the fortunes of his people, to conceive and speak of himself as suffering with them, though the time be far remote. Cases under this law abound in the



prophecies. See Isaiah 15: 5, and 16; 11, and 21: 2, 4, 10. Besides, the use of the third person, "they," in vs. 4-8 in this same connection, will just as much prove that the writer was *not* living then and there, as the use of the first person in vs. 9-13 proves that he was.—"Judgment" *i. e.*, practical equity, as sought and obtained in the courts of law, is far away as if (personified) she had left the country bodily; and justice can not overtake us, even if she would. The people had altogether parted company with justice, so as to be beyond her influence.—Hence it is all in vain that they wait for light, in the sense of a better and more peaceful, social life. "Light" is the favorite Hebrew emblem of happiness and prosperity; and is used here to imply exemption from the crimes of fraud and violence.

10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead *men*.

11. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far off from us.

The figure of darkness as a general symbol of calamity is still kept up. It is as if all the lights of heaven were withdrawn and the people were groping round to feel for the house-walls; stumbling at noonday as men would in total darkness.—"Growling like bears," "moaning like doves," still depicts the general calamity. Justice and help are sought in vain.

12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them;

13. In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

While justice and right-doing are far away, their transgressions and iniquities are exceedingly near, in fact "*with us*," ever present, constantly suggested by our agony of suffering and made but too painfully familiar ["we know them"].—The original of v. 13 is a model of compact and forcible description which can scarcely be transferred to our language. This approximates to it; There are sinning and lying against the Lord and turning away from after our God; speaking of oppression and revolt.

14. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity can not enter.

15. Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

The thought expressed in v. 9 is still amplified; judgment and justice exiled from the community; truth fallen prostrate in the *street*, i. e., in the public squares, places of resort about the city gates where the civil courts were held. The passage affirms that truth and justice were utterly prostrate in the courts. —V. 15, thus: "And so, truth is missing (not to be found) and whoever abstains from wrong-doing subjects himself to violence and spoil"—a state of society in which might makes right and the innocent and non-resistant become the prey and plunder of ruffians. Of course the Lord saw this, and it was grievous in his eyes that there was no justice there.

Let us pause here a moment to note that such flagrant immoralities, such utter prostration of all justice, even in those civil institutions which God had established among his people for its support, are accounted of God as overwhelming proofs of utter apostasy. In his view there can be no piety where there is such utter lack of common morality. His professed people are hopelessly degenerate; even their religion has become a mass of putridity.—There is not the least reason to suppose that this picture paints the moral or the religious life of the exiles shortly before their restoration from Babylon. If it does, they were even worse than before their captivity and utterly unfit to be re-planted in their own land.—But the picture does delineate with historic fidelity the religious and mostly the moral state of the Scribes and Pharisees, the leading civil and religious influences among the Jews, shortly before their destruction by the Romans. This degeneracy had been in progress for several generations, and during the life of Christ on earth was far advanced toward the condition described here. It was ancient Judaism, effete, palsied of its moral power, perverted to the extreme of formality and self-righteousness, and therefore solemnly abandoned of God, and given up to be superseded by the gospel system.—This is the point of transition described in the passage now before us.

16. And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

"Man" in the sense of a whole man, a hero, and "intercessor" in the sense of one who intervenes for help, are equivalent expressions, meaning, that God saw no helper and no help for this state of things, and therefore aroused himself to the needful work. "His own arm saved" (i. e., his cause and people) "for himself." His sense of right and love of justice sustained his energy and fired his soul for vigorous action.—V. 17 should begin, "And so, or consequently, he put on righteousness," etc., girding himself with his armor as a hero for the battle. The sentiment is that his regard for his earthly kingdom and people, his love of justice and righteousness, arouse his soul to special retribution. He will therefore bring vengeance upon his enemies and deliverance to his friends. It is supposable that the first two clauses which name righteousness and salvation refer to his deliverance of his friends, and the other two, to vengeance on his enemies.

18. According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense:

The repetition in the first clause is intensive, meaning that in the strictest requital of desert, he will render just recompense to his foes. The Hebrew is peculiar, yet the sense admits of no doubt.—The "islands" are here the people of remote countries as in chaps. 41 : 1, 5, and 49 : 1. They seem to be thought of here primarily as the enemies of his people, yet perhaps with the implication as in the next verse that they will be impressed with the fear of his name and of his glory, and thus many of them become his people.

19. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

The "name" of the Lord in the first clause and his "glory" in the second are equivalent expressions for the manifested presence and attributes of Jehovah. They shall see his hand in judgment on his enemies and in salvation to his people. They of the west and they of the east will alike behold these demonstrations of God. All people of the remotest lands are embraced under these two of the cardinal quarters of the globe. The usual order is first the east, and then the west, e. g., chap. 43 : 5, and Mal. 1 : 11. Some have suggested that this reversal of the usual order may indicate that in the latter times of the gospel age, the order of progression will be reversed and the light of God will travel from the west toward the east, as in the earlier ages, from

the east toward the west.—The last clause of this verse has been construed variously. The Vulgate, Luther, Lowth and Gesenius, followed by most of the modern Germans, read substantially thus; “When he shall come like a river straitened in its course which a strong wind driveth along.”—The strongest and most palpable objection to this is the ineptness of the figure; a strong wind forcing along a river whose special feature is its being compressed within narrow banks. These are precisely the circumstances in which a strong wind has least power to move water. In such circumstances the stream moves by the forces of gravitation and wind is of the smallest possible account. It is scarcely supposable that Isaiah who never balked in the use of a figure could have used this.—There are also other objections, especially this, that Isaiah uses the phrase, “Spirit of the Lord,” repeatedly in the sense of the Divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost; but no where else in the sense of a *strong wind*. See chaps. 11 : 2, and 61 : 1 ; and in the same sense, “the Spirit,” chap. 32 : 15, and “my Spirit” in 44 : 3, and “his Spirit” in 48 : 16. Besides, this very context refers to the Spirit of God (v. 21); “My Spirit which is upon thee,” etc., shall remain an abiding power, etc. It is scarcely supposable that the phrase is used in two senses so diverse, in a connection so close.—The verb rendered in the English version, “lift up a standard,” admits this sense no less readily than that given by Gesenius, “driving along,” and indeed, more readily.—It still remains to be determined whether the power which comes on like a river (“flood”) is that of God, or of his enemy. The word rendered “enemy” in our English version will in itself bear this sense, or it may be an adjective in the sense, straitened, confined. The fact that the same word appears in the plural, in v. 18 (“adversaries”) favors the former; but its location in the clause still more favors the latter. This location is right for an adjective, but is not the right one for a noun which is to lead the thought in the passage as the subject of discourse.—I therefore prefer to translate thus; For it [*i. e.*, God’s glory or power—this being the nearest antecedent] “will move on like the straitened river on which the Spirit of the Lord lifts up his banner.”—The twofold figure here is at once forcible and grand; the mighty river (the word very commonly used for the great Euphrates, and always for a great river), compressed within narrow banks and, therefore, dashing, foaming, and bearing down all before it; and on this sublimely sweeping torrent, the Spirit of the Lord spreads his glorious banner, seeming to proclaim, *By this Jehovah conquers!* The Spirit and the word of the living God will constitute the moving forces which are to subdue the nations to the love and the fear of his name.

20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto

them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

The connection of this verse may be, "Yea, even a Redeemer shall *come*," (the same verb as in the clause previous)—*come* as a mighty river, moving within narrow banks. He shall come to Zion, and especially to save those of Jacob who turn from their sins. The salvation of those from Jacob who could be brought (by wise means) to accept of Christ, was first in the order of time in the gospel work, an object dear to the Messiah's heart.—The Christian reader will notice with interest that Paul (Rom. 11 : 26) associates this prophecy with a glorious era when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in (*i. e.*, to the gospel communion), and "So, all Israel shall be saved."

21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

"As for me," is especially emphatic. For *my part*, on the side of divine agency and as the fruit of my divine mercy, this is my gospel covenant, the genius of the "new covenant" of which Jeremiah speaks at length (chap. 31 : 31-34); which is quoted (Heb. 8 : 8-12); and of which the mission of the Spirit of God as a revealer and teacher of truth, and a power on human hearts working mightily to regenerate and sanctify—is the great central element.—"My Spirit that is upon thee"—first upon the Messiah, without measure (John 3 : 36); and then upon his people, shall be abiding, the permanent characteristic of the gospel age. It is naturally associated most closely with the word of truth which God puts into the mouth of his Son, and then through him and through the Spirit, into the mouth and into the heart of all his people, his spiritual seed, and their seed onward through all generations of the church to the end of time.—The sense of the passage obviously is that this gift of the Spirit is to be permanent and abiding, even as the words of truth shall be, and that in their natural combination, in accordance with the promise of Christ, they represent the vital powers by means of which God's name and glory are to be revealed before all the nations and his fear and love impressed on all hearts.—Alexander has well said that "Israel is here, as in many other parts of this great prophecy, regarded not merely as a receiver but as a dispenser of the truth—an office with which as we have seen, the Body (the Church), is invested in connection with the Head and in perpetual subordination to Him. Israel as well as the Mes-

siah and in due dependence on him, is to be the light of the Gentiles, the reclamer of apostate nations ; and in this high mission and vocation, is to be sustained and prospered by the never failing presence of the Holy Spirit as the author and finisher of all revelation ;" and I should add, of all moral transformation in human souls—of all conversions, of all real holiness.—Such is the strain of both Old Testament prophecy and of New Testament doctrine. See Isaiah 42 : 1-7, and 44 : 3, and 49 : 1-9, and 51 : 16, and 54 : 3, and 56 : 6-8, and 58 : 12. Also Jer. 31 : 31-34. Joel 2 : 28, and Ezek. 36 : 27, and 39 : 29.



## CHAPTER LX.

THE previous chapter has fully opened the way so that the next scene in the prophetic panorama will legitimately be, *The duties and the glories of the gospel age*. The powers of sin have seemed to reach their maximum ; Satan has done his worst ; he has fearfully poisoned and paralyzed (morally) even the covenant people of God ; but by so doing he has called out the justice and judgment of the Almighty and aroused the Omnipotent arm to retrieve the cause of truth and righteousness. The church's extremity is God's opportunity ; the conflict deepens ; God's word and Spirit are to be matched against the whole array of the powers of darkness, and the prophetic eye is thrown afar down the vista of time to sweep the field of battle and tell the ultimate result.—Beyond all question, this is the starting point from which this chapter begins. The Redeemer has come to Zion (chap. 59 : 20) ; her own Messiah appears ; Judaism, long since decayed and waxed old, retires, to give place to a new form of religious organization and to new modes of Christian life. The Spirit and the word (59 : 21)—agencies simple, yet through the power of God, most mighty—are now commissioned for the field. The last thought of the previous chapter is that these agencies—the working forces of the Almighty—are to have this field to the end of time—that is to say, till the victories of the Messiah are complete, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, or in the phrase of Isaiah, till men "shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (11 : 9).—Now therefore with most beautiful fitness the Lord through the prophet calls upon his people, his spiritual Zion, to "arise and shine" in the light of gospel truth already breaking forth as the very face of God upon

her (vs. 1, 2); for Gentiles are coming to walk in this light and to be blessed therein (v. 3); let her lift up her eyes and behold their thronging hosts, her own new-born sons and daughters (v. 4). Her heart throbs under almost overpowering emotions (v. 5); Gentile converts come with their wealth and their full hearts from Arabia on the south (vs. 6, 7), and from the isles of the west (vs. 8-10); by these forces of treasure and of willing hands, her walls arise (v. 10); her gates stand open continually for new accessions (v. 11), and no nation can safely withhold its contributions (v. 12); the glories of Lebanon adorn her city (v. 13); her enemies humbly acknowledge her the chosen of God (v. 14); Zion, honored and enriched by the nations, becomes surpassingly glorious (vs. 15, 16); old things give place to things new and brighter (v. 17); violence and wrong are felt and feared no more (v. 18); God himself becomes her abiding light and glory (vs. 19, 20); her people all righteous and God glorifying himself in them, crown the magnificent panorama of this wonderful vision of gospel victories and triumphs.—As I read over this unparalleled description, I am impressed almost painfully with the feeling that no comments can do it justice. Fortunately it needs no aid of commentator to make its general significance clear; its beauties apparent; its sublimity and grandeur most thoroughly thrilling and inspiring. If the reader will carefully consider and apply the scope of the context so as to see in this chapter an outline of the ultimate results of gospel truth made mighty in human souls by the Spirit of God; and if, furthermore, he will bear in mind that the seer whose prophetic vision swept this august field and grasped these ultimate results, was a Jew, of Hebrew thought, imagination, and surroundings; who must therefore, by a simple law of necessity, think of and see the future Zion only as the Zion of his own time re-made, extended, re-adorned, and still the rallying center for the nations of the earth, proselyted to her altar and to her temple-shrines, the significance of the whole will be readily seen.—As to the time of fulfillment, none can say more than that it began with the Christian age, and will be complete when and only when the gospel shall have had free course in all lands, and the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. When the state of the world comes up to this description, men will know it, and can say with no faltering of doubt, "There hath failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken unto the house of Israel; all is come to pass" (Josh. 21: 45.) Till then, there will be work for the toiling hand; prayer for the waiting but trustful heart, and the inspirations of hope, as when Christians work toward an end which they know lies fixed irreversibly in the purposes of the Holy One of Israel, awaiting fulfillment in its time.

1. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

The call is to the true church, God's real children. Her "light" is her own Messiah who comes, "the Light of the world," and bids his people fulfill the same mission, saying to them, "Ye too are the light of the world" (Matt. 5: 14).—"Is risen upon thee," gives in the Hebrew a beautiful allusion to the rising sun. The glory of Jehovah is a rising sun to thee; or, less poetically, rises like the sun upon thee.—The "glory of the Lord" is that special manifestation of God to men which is made in the person of Jesus Christ, the terms being borrowed from the ancient Shechinah. Note Paul's application of it (2 Cor. 3: 18). "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," etc. There seems to be in this verse a tacit allusion to the state of dense darkness and blindness through which the church had recently passed, as said in the previous chapter (vs. 9, 10).

2. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

The Gentiles had been for ages in moral midnight. The light of divine knowledge comes up like the rising sun, but first on Zion only. "His glory" expresses the revelations of himself in his law, his gospel, and his ways of government.

3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

This first statement respecting the Gentiles seems to comprehend more than merely their *coming* to this light, although this was necessarily the first step. The words legitimately mean, The Gentiles shall *walk in* thy light, and kings in or under the brightness of thy sunrising. This verb means strictly to walk. The next verse has the common verb, to *come*. "They shall *come* to thee."

4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.

Go up upon thy watch-tower; look all around on every side and see the thronging hosts gathering into thy house as their home. (Compare 49: 18.) "Thy sons" and "thy daughters" are Gentile converts, come to make their home in the bosom of God's Zion. In the manner of conception, they are proselytes, coming in as under the old economy to cast in their lot with Israel and worship God at his temple. Some writer suggests that the sons come on



foot, but the daughters, less capable of such fatigue, are borne as mothers and fathers bear their children, on the side. The Hebrew means, borne as a child in the arms, and not strictly "nursed" as the English version has it.

5. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

There is real doubt and probably always will be, whether the first verb, translated "see," is from the Hebrew verb which means to *see*, or from another root which means to *fear*. The authorities for the Hebrew text are conflicting. Fortunately it makes but little difference in the ultimate thought. The sense, "shall *see*," is pertinent, referring to the command in the verse previous, "Lift up thine eyes," etc.—The next verb, rendered "flow," admits of the better sense, *to shine*; *i. e.*, thy face shall shine; brighten up with joy. The next words mean, Thy heart shall throb and swell—words expressive of her intense emotions of blended surprise and joy, the first impressions of which were almost overpowering. The cause is touched briefly in the last clause where the words for "abundance" and "forces" may mean either the wealth or the multitudes of people. Probably both ideas are embraced—the masses of people *coming with their substance*, as the prophet goes on to show. The view of such incoming hosts, not poverty-stricken hordes, but caravans laden with wealth; people coming to enrich the holy city and adorn her goodly temples—how could it fail to agitate her throbbing bosom! Ah what a change!

6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

Proceeding to specify the quarters whence these moving hosts approach he first (vs. 6, 7) indicates Arabia. Of course, from her deserts they come on camels and dromedaries, and they bring gold and incense. It will be remembered that the Queen of Sheba in her visit to Solomon (1 Kings 10: 2) "came with a very great train, with camels that bare spices (incense) and very much gold and precious stones." Sheba was known as Arabia Felix, famous through the ages of her history for these productions.—Midian is named as the fourth son of Abraham and Keturah; Ephah as the eldest son of Midian. Sheba was also a grandson of Abraham among his children by Keturah. These were the heads of Arab tribes. See Gen. 25: 2-4.—The figure in the first clause is best sustained by reading it, "The stream of camels shall cover, *i. e.*, inundate, thee, filling all thy streets and squares as with the

waters of a flood. Isaiah uses the same word to say (11: 9), "as the waters cover the sea."—In the last clause, the verb for "show forth" has with Isaiah the well-established sense of *bringing good tidings*. See notes on chaps. 40: 9, and 41: 27, and 52: 7. It is therefore at least possible that this last clause was intended to express the thought, "And with praises to God they bear glad tidings; that is, of the conversion of their people. They bring good tidings, to the praise of the Lord.

7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

Nebaioth and Kedar are Arab names. They were respectively the first and second sons of Ishmael (Gen. 25: 13). In Isaiah 21: 13-17, Kedar represents Arabia as a whole. Flocks and rams were their chief products. The sense would be better expressed here by reading it, "The flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together *for thee*"—for thy use especially in sacrifice—and "the rams of Nebaioth shall minister" or serve (passively) "*for thee*" in the same sense, since they are said to come up with acceptance upon God's altar.—The last clause means, I will adorn with distinguished honor my beautiful temple.

But here let us recur more distinctly to the sense in which the whole description throughout this chapter is figurative. Isaiah in vision sees far in the future the glorious diffusion of the gospel among the nations of the earth and its wonderful fruits in the complete and unreserved consecration of wealth and of soul to the service and worship of God. But, the reader will note, he does not see these great facts of the gospel age clothed in Christian forms, or as we may say, Christian drapery, costume. He does not see Bible and Missionary Societies; Christian Institutions for education and for the diffusion of gospel knowledge. No; what he sees is clothed in Jewish drapery. They are such things as would be done if the Jewish system were to remain unchanged and the whole world be brought to Jerusalem to learn of God there and to worship there at his temple.—The obvious reason for this mode of representation is that figures are essentially a human language, and Isaiah must needs be spoken to by the revealing Spirit in a language which he understood; and by the same necessity he must speak to his countrymen in a language understood by them. The language and figures of the gospel age they did not understand; those of the Hebrew age they did. Hence to give the idea of worshiping God, the forms must be Jewish; and Gentiles must come up for worship to the temple at Jerusalem. Hence also the nations named are not those which are now most prominent in the

heathen world, but are precisely those which were prominent then. Arabia on the south and east and the islands on the great west (v. 9) would be first and most naturally thought of by a Jew of Isaiah's time as needing conversion.—On the same principle of interpretation, we can not assume that the temple at Jerusalem will be the great central object in this glorious gospel age. We can not take in its literal sense what is said here of the flocks of Kedar and of the rams of Nebaioth, coming up with acceptance upon God's altar. By no means; for temple and altar have alike gone down and passed away, as to their literal form, and nothing remains of them save their spiritual significance as indicating the pure, earnest, self-sacrificing worship and service of God. Hence those who apply this chapter literally to a community of Jews restored to Palestine and to a temple rebuilt there and gorgeously adorned by the contributions of all the Gentile world, are merely dreaming. They have lost sight of the real world they live in. They have quite forgotten the great distinctive features of the Christian age as contrasted with the Mosaic dispensation according to the teachings of Christ and his apostles. They must have forgotten what Christ said to the woman of Samaria: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall worship the Father, neither in this mountain, *nor yet at Jerusalem*, but in spirit and truth only," nothing more being required, or indeed in this respect admissible.

8. Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

The true Zion is here supposed to stretch her eyes westward; and lo, far out on the great sea, she espies the white sails of the ships of Tarshish. Is it strange she thinks first of light, fleecy clouds, floating along the horizon, or of a flock of white doves coming home to their dove-cotes? It is at least supposable that this is given as the first impression made by this westward view.—The spirit of the verse is analogous to that of chap. 49: 21. "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these? Whence come these throngs of my children?" Surprise and joy blend in their strongest and most thrilling emotions.

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

Here is the answer to her question. Marvel not at this, "*for*" [this being the sense of the word rendered "*surely*"] "*for*

the isles shall wait for my law," as already said (42: 4). And the great ships of Tarshish, built to navigate the entire length of the Mediterranean, shall be first in the order of time to bring thy sons from far [Zion's new born Gentile sons]; their silver and their gold with them, as the best proof that their hearts are *in* this coming, and with a Hebrew reference also to beautifying and furnishing God's temple at Jerusalem with the needful victims according to the Mosaic system.—They "come to the name of the Lord thy God," etc., that is, to the place where he "recorded his name" and met his people to bless them—the one ancient and prescribed place for all ritual worship. The sentiment is, These persons are truly converted to the God of Israel, now known as the God of his spiritual Zion. All this is because now at last, thy God is conferring peculiar honor upon thee. After remaining so long in comparative neglect, unknowing and unknown, thy God appears now to invest thee with distinguished honor.

10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.

"Strangers," Gentile born, shall build thy temple-walls, as Solomon employed foreign laborers for the severest toil in the building of his temple. The sense; Gentiles shall be laborious and successful laborers in my gospel kingdom.—The logic of the last clause is not, *because* I smote thee; but because, *although* I once smote thee, yet now much more abundantly have I had mercy upon thee.

11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

So great is the pressure upon her of these throngs of returning converts, that her gates must needs stand open day and night. The last clause assigns the reason; to bring in unto thee the masses of the Gentiles, their kings also being led in.—The word translated "forces" is naturally a war term and may mean either the armies or the wealth and military stores which are the sinews of war. The thought probably includes both the people themselves *and* their wealth, cattle and gold with them.—The very last word seems to imply that, willing or unwilling, the kings are led in—the public sentiment of their people bearing them along. Literally, "their kings" [too] "being led [or brought] in," which must certainly mean that this immense con-

fluence of people and nations to Zion will include their kings also, corresponding to chap. 49: 23.

12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

This stands related to the previous verse as the penalty for *not* doing what is there required. All kings and all people must come to Christ to serve him in his Zion, or must perish. The grand crisis hour has come. Whoever yields to the truth and Spirit of God will receive Jesus as Lord and King, and join his people heartily in true homage, love and service to Him; but whoever among all the nations of the earth will not bow to Christ must perish utterly.—This law of God's moral kingdom takes effect even now in its own way, and more and more palpably as the Lord's converting agencies become more powerful. Hence in those latter days of their final, transcendent power, this law must obtain universally and none escape its decisive, resistless sway.

13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

In figure, this rebuilds Jerusalem and her temple with cedars of Lebanon and all the best varieties of choice wood.—By "*the place of my sanctuary*," some understand the city as being the locality of the temple—perhaps correctly. "*The place*" of Jehovah's feet conceives of the city as his foot-stool, even as in chap. 66: 1, he represents the earth to be. "*Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.*" In this sense Jerusalem was yet more specially the place of his feet.—Another question has been raised respecting these trees; Were they living and ornamental; for shade and natural beauty; or were they wrought into timber for building? The latter is best sustained by the scope of the context which contemplates the rebuilding of the temple and perhaps of the city.

14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Public feeling toward the church of God is reversed; her old enemies bow submissively and humble themselves low at her feet, acknowledging that the true God is with her—there and there only.—"*They shall call thee*," means in the peculiar

idiom of Isaiah, shall fully acknowledge that *thou art the* city of Jehovah, and that Zion belongs to the Holy One of Israel, altogether his own.—Those that “despised thee” in the sense intended here, had not only contemned but maltreated her. But now her old enemies succumb, willing or unwilling. They know that God is with her.—The sentiment of this verse appears also in chaps. 45 : 14, and 49 : 23.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

The first word, “Whereas” is less strong in the sense of requital than the Hebrew which means, *Because* thou hast been so forsaken and hated that travelers went scornfully round and would not pass through thee; therefore I will make thee an eternal exaltation; *i. e.*, will exalt thee to the highest dignity and honor age after age indefinitely.—“A joy of many generations,” is the parallel, and of course, nearly equivalent expression.—Since the scope of the chapter pertains to the gospel age, and consequently to a state of Christ’s kingdom *in this world*, under its present order, we can not predicate a strict eternity of this city. An indefinitely long duration, however, is certainly intended.

16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

The figures in the first clause need not be mistaken. She shall draw abundantly from the resources of all the Gentile nations and their kings; shall be enriched by their wealth and labors, and built up by their consecration to her interests. See the same sentiment, chaps. 49 : 23, and 61 : 6, and 66 : 12. In her own joyful experience Zion shall know that Jehovah is her Savior; that her own Messiah is the Almighty God.

17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

The first part of the verse means universal change, and only for the better. Gold in place of brass, silver for iron, shows that wonderful *progress* has been made. The expressions refer tacitly (we may suppose) to what is said of the glory of Solomon’s reign in these external points; “All the drinking vessels of Solomon were of gold; none were of silver; it was nothing ac-

counted of in the days of Solomon." "The king made silver in Jerusalem as stones," etc. (2 Chron. 9 : 20, 27). Dropping the figure, the sense will be that the piety of the church will be of a type far more pure and true than in her former ages ; less alloyed with human corruptions. Doubtless also it is implied here that her resulting morality is indefinitely purer, for God is wont to estimate piety by the morality which results from it. —The last clause shows that the thought is upon public morality ; Her officers, magistrates, will not be iniquitous and oppressive, as they were in the days of the old prophets ; but will ensure peace and righteousness ; or in this strong language, will *be* peace, and will *be* righteousness. Even "the exactors," those bad rulers who abused their power to oppress the people, are now themselves intrinsic righteousness.

18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

The reference to her "walls" as connected with "salvation," leads the mind rather to foreign enemies than to domestic oppressors. Universal peace will prevail. This corresponds with chaps. 2 : 4, and 9 : 5-7, and 11 : 4-9, etc. —What a city this ! Her walls synonymous with salvation ; her gates with praise. God's never failing protection, her bulwarks and city walls ; justice always administered at her gates, to the honor of the gospel and the praise of God. The cry of violence is heard no more in all the land ; the ravages of war never pass over her fair fields and glorious city again. The old calamities of her former time never return.

19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

20. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Raising to its sublimest height the common Hebrew figure which represents calamity as darkness and prosperity as light, the prophet here sees such light and glory as no earthly sun and moon could produce. Hence the sun and the moon fade out as our stars are wont to do when the sun arises, and now God alone becomes the great Sun in the heavens of his Zion, irradiating her city by day and by night, for really there is no night there. This glorious sun never sets ; this moon never

wanes. The Lord is her everlasting light and her mourning days are past forever.—The last clause drops the figure and gives us a view of literal facts. No more calamities befall her; no nights of darkness shed their gloom upon her. All is joy and peace because God is there in his spiritual glory and power, and men are sanctified by his Spirit and walk before him in the light and love of his gospel.—The Revelator John has the same sublime conception in his New Jerusalem. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light" (Rev. 21 : 23, and 22 : 5.)—The reader will note in this chapter the twofold use of light as a figure; first, to represent moral truth—its source and its power; and, secondly, its results in the blessedness of the people thus enlightened. First, Christ rises with his gospel as a light upon Zion, and through her instrumentality, upon the Gentile nations; and then the blessed fruits of this light are represented as a glorious and perpetual day, of which God himself is the sun that never sets. This change of figure occasions no confusion of ideas, since the things represented are related to each other as cause and effect. Naturally the chapter begins with the former sense of the figure, and ends with the latter.

21. Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Through no figures of speech, which men sometimes misinterpret, or controvert, but in the plainest literal language we have here the elementary ideas of the whole chapter, the secret of this wonderful prosperity in Zion and this unsullied glory and universal joy. All lies in two facts; the "people all righteous," and God, the glorious author of this stupendous moral transformation. The first statement looks to that intrinsic righteousness of the heart which is true piety toward God and which implies real regeneration, carried on to its highest development in sanctification. The other fact—that this great moral change is due to God only—is expressed in the clauses, "The branch of *my* planting," "the work of *my* hands," done by myself for my own glory.—"Branch," here as in chap. 11 : 1, is a young plant with its root, which God transplants and rears into maturity, strength, and beauty. Our Lord uses this figure; "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15 : 13. See also John 15 : 12.)—It is interesting to note here that these perfected fruits of the gospel are wrought out in this sinful world *for the glory of God*.



His honor is involved in this grand moral enterprise, and he will never desist; will never deem the work done, till the truth and Spirit of the Lord have won these sublime immortal victories over the powers of human depravity and of the Prince of darkness.

22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

Israel—long a small, little one—now expands by a wonderful growth—one becoming a thousand and a small one a strong nation. We may trace an allusion here to the promise made to Abraham, that from himself alone, even in his old age, after all hope of offspring had nearly died within his heart, and he was thus a little and a small one, there should yet be “so many as the stars of heaven for multitude.”—God will hasten this in its time. All these glorious predictions shall surely be fulfilled. The veracity of the All-truthful One is pledged; the strength of the omnipotent arm is engaged, and it *will be done*. In its appointed time the world will see it and angels rejoice over it, for it can not fail.



## CHAPTER LXI.

THE Messiah himself appears, indicating his special mission (vs. 1-3); the fruit of his labors upon human well-being (v. 4); the accession of new laborers to Zion and their work (vs. 5, 6); the stupendous changes wrought in Zion in her transition from the Mosaic to the Christian age (v. 7); the grounds or reasons why Jehovah has wrought this change and will make it permanent (v. 8); how the gospel will vindicate its worth and glory before the nations (v. 9); the Messiah rejoicing in the magnificent results of his mission, and in the omnipotence of God pledged to insure them (vs. 10, 11).

Compared with chap. 60, which treats mainly of the results of gospel truth in the better days of the Christian age, this chapter falls back somewhat to treat more fully of the *causes* of these results; of the manner in which the Messiah becomes a light to the nations; of his condescension and compassion in ministering to the humble, the lowly, the sin-bound, and the heart-broken; but soon the course of thought glides insensibly into the same channel, the workings and results of the gospel system.

1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*.

The great question here is, Who is the speaker, represented by "*me*," upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests?—Some have answered, The prophet himself, either in his own person or as representing the prophets of Israel as a class. But I can see no ground for such a view. On the other hand the reasons for supposing the speaker to be the Messiah are entirely conclusive. For, he and he only is the Head of this entire gospel mission and work which leads the thought in this context and is the great subject of the preceding chapter. He is the Redeemer who comes to Zion (59 : 20), and upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests and abides, as well as upon his people also through him (59 : 21). This allusion to the Spirit of the Lord in the close of chap. 59, has special value in this argument because the passage lies in the context, and indicates the course of thought. —Then moreover, the same view is amply supported by previous Messianic prophecies in which the baptism of the Messiah with the Spirit of God is made prominent—*e. g.*, chaps. 11 : 2-5, and 42 : 1. These considerations are abundantly sufficient; yet let it still be said that further support comes from those prophecies which represent the Lord as giving his Messiah a message of truth to deliver, words to proclaim to his people, as here stated; *e. g.*, Isaiah 42 : 6, 7; "I the Lord will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison," etc. Also chap. 49 : 2; "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;" and 50 : 4; "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary;" and 51 : 16, "And I have put my words in thy mouth that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people." So also 52 : 15.—Thus abundantly does the entire course of prophetic thought in Isaiah confirm the construction which attributes these words to the Messiah. He is throughout, pre-eminently, *the great gospel-preacher*. —It is scarcely necessary therefore to add finally, that Jesus himself explicitly endorses this exposition, having gone before us in applying these words to himself. See Luke 4 : 16-21. There in the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath, having risen up to read, the book of Isaiah was handed to him. He turned to this passage and read v. 1 and part of v. 2, and then began his comment and exhortation by saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And "the people bare him

witness," forcibly impressed, we must suppose, with the pertinence of their application to both his preaching and his works. —The original, translated "to preach good tidings," is the word which has occurred repeatedly in the sense of preaching the gospel;—*e. g.*, 40: 9, and 41: 27, and 52: 7.—"Binding up," applied to the broken in heart, carries out the figure and refers to the consolation and peace of an humble trust in God which naturally heals the wounded spirit. Compare chap. 57: 15, 18, 19.—Liberty to the captive draws its figure and terms from the day of Jubilee which gave freedom to all Hebrew bondmen. Both this "liberty to the captive" and "the opening of the prison to the bound" must be referred to spiritual bondage, the slavery in which sin and Satan hold their victims, and from which Christ sets them free.

2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn,

3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

"The acceptable year of the Lord," is specially the Jubilee, a beautiful emblem of gospel redemption, since on this year they "proclaimed liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev. 25: 10). So Jesus blew the gospel trumpet, proclaiming redemption through all the land, so that whosoever would might come out of bondage into liberty. "Come unto me," said he, "all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy and my burden which is light," implying that so the yoke and burden of sin would be forever broken and put away, and only his easy yoke be assumed and borne delightfully instead.—In the choice of the words "year" and "day" (v. 2), may it be supposed that the Lord intended an antithesis between the *year* of God's mercy and the *day* of his vengeance, as if the latter were relatively short and the former long in the destined ages of Millennial peace and mercy? Possibly; not certainly.—To the word "appoint" Dr. Alexander gives the sense to *put* upon them, anticipating the leading thought in the expressions which follow, viz., clothe them with beauty in place of ashes, etc.—But the sense of the English version is better sustained by the original and may be readily applied here to indicate in general God's purpose to do all the things which are named in detail below.—The word rendered "beauty" should have the more spe-

cific sense of *crown*—an ornamental head-dress. Oriental mourners cast ashes on their heads. The Messiah represents the broken-hearted, humbled sinner as doing the same; but gives him instead a princely crown.—To “anoint with oil,” *e. g.*, at the inauguration of a king, was a joyful event. Jesus gives this in place of mourning.—By a “garment of praise” is probably meant, a garment which excites admiration and is worthy of praise. This takes the place of a *faint* spirit. This word, rendered in our text “heaviness,” is used by Isaiah (42: 3) of the faintly burning wick, there translated, “the smoking flax he will not quench.”—“Trees of righteousness”—*i. e.*, trees that are *right*, perfect, all that a tree should be, such as the powerful oak—the model of firmness and stability—well represent those substantial Christians whom God plants and rears up for his own glory.—Looking over the scope of these first three verses, it may well excite our admiration that the sublimely glorious results of chap. 60, are effected by agencies and methods so mild and gentle, so condescending and compassionate, so fraught with loving-kindness and matchless mercy. Can it be that the world is to be regenerated, new-born from its vile depravity into glorious purity and peace, by lifting the load of sin from broken hearts; by taking blindness away from morally sightless eyes; by bringing life-long slaves forth into liberty, and putting crowns in place of ashes on the heads of mourners? Even so does divine wisdom propose to withstand and uproot sin, and so divine grace will assuredly conquer and triumph.

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

“They” in this verse are those stable Christians, spoken of above as “trees of righteousness.” What they shall do has been already expressed under the same and similar figures in chaps. 49: 8, and 54: 3, and 58: 12. The idea is, they repair the wastes and desolations of sin wrought during the ages in which Satan has had sway. The figure conceives of these desolations as *external*—*i. e.*, ruined villages; burned cities; fields wasted by war, or impoverished by slave culture: but the underlying sense is rather of those usages in society, those habitudes of thought, those immoral, depraved maxims and sentiments which shut out God, and pervert man’s moral convictions and thus make the *souls of men* desolate.

5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien *shall be* your plough-men and your vine-dressers.

With the mind still on the figurative conception of the work

to be done in restoring a waste country to verdure and fertility, the passage brings forward a new set of laborers, *i. e.*, new to Jewish life, viz., aliens, foreigners. See chap. 60: 10, and the case of Solomon, building his temple mainly by the aid of foreign laborers. Gentile converts will become valuable auxiliary forces in this gospel work.

6. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: *men* shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

The shape of these statements seems to have been determined by the analogous case of the building of Solomon's temple, foreigners doing the hard labor, but the native Jews filling the priesthood and performing the more sacred and honored temple service. Perhaps also there may be an allusion to a similar division of labor among the Jews themselves, *e. g.*, the High Priest; the subordinate priests; the Levites; and the Gibeonites. Yet it can not be supposed that any analogous distinction is intended between Gentile and Jewish converts.—The persons addressed here, "Ye" who are to be "priests of the Lord," comprise all God's true-hearted gospel laborers, whether Jew or Gentile, and with special reference to those who do the work of the gospel ministry. They are to be amply sustained by their Christian brethren. They are to fill a sphere analogous to that of the ancient priests, and, like them, must live at and of the temple. See Paul's doctrine (Rom. 15: 27, and 1 Cor. 9: 11, and Gal. 6: 6).—That they shall "eat the riches of the Gentiles," may also mean that God in his providence brings the resources of wealth, industry and art, into the service of his Zion, transferring from unconsecrated commerce and perhaps from ungodly hands, the resources and powers of art and of Christian civilization, to the use of his gospel kingdom. The aid furnished to the missionary work by printing, navigation, steam, the thousand working forces of the age, may be the very sort of thing intended.—The Hebrew, translated, "In their glory shall ye boast yourselves," seems rather to mean, ye shall change places with them in the matter of glory. Ye shall come into their glory; and they go out into your comparative weakness and dishonor. God will give you the full use of all their working forces: they shall go back into your former poverty and weakness. This etymology and consequent sense of the verb are now generally accepted by the best critics.

7. For your shame *ye shall have* double; and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in

their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

Similar expressions with a sense at least analogous occur chap. 40: 2. There the antithesis seems to be between the meagerness of the Mosaic dispensation, and the fullness and glory of the Christian. Here, it may be more specifically between the working forces, the positive strength, of the church for great moral achievements on the one hand; and the influence and power of the ungodly world on the other. When the riches of the Gentiles pass over into the hands of Zion in the sense of the verse previous, then instead of Zion's former shame, she shall have double: instead of confusion, being ashamed and confounded because of her relative weakness, she now has a joyous portion, a lot in which she may well exult, so that in their land they shall have double strength and glory, and it is to them an everlasting joy.

8. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

This verse is logically connected with what immediately precedes. The Lord gives honor to his righteous people (as said there) *because* he loves judgment, right dealing; and also shame to those who oppress wrongfully *because* he hates unjust violence—literally, the tearing away with injustice, *i. e.*, of what belongs to others.—The word translated in the English version, “burnt-offerings,” is now held by the best critics to mean *injustice*, wrong, the word coming by etymology from a root which means, to be distorted, wrested, and hence wrong; and not, as was anciently supposed, from the verb which means to go up, *i. e.*, upon the altar, whence the usual word for burnt-offerings.—The next clause means, I will give them, the righteous, their reward in truth.—The word used here for “work” often means the *reward* of such work, a sense which here accords much better with the context.

9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the seed *which* the LORD hath blessed.

Another element in their reward is that their posterity, the godly race, shall be known favorably, honorably, among the Gentile nations, with the respect due to their piety and uprightness, and because God gives them manifest tokens of his approbation. The substantial respect felt by the heathen of our time for the gospel missionaries who have gone among them to preach

Christ and to live in the spirit of his gospel, may be taken as an illustration and an incipient fulfillment of this prophecy.

10. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

Here the Messiah speaks again, as in the first three verses of the chapter, expressing his exalted joy in God because he thus adorns his Son with garments of salvation, *i. e.*, makes him victorious in the salvation of the world and gives his name and cause such distinguished honor before all the nations. The latter idea comes naturally forward from the preceding context. The servants of Christ are held in the highest honor and esteem among the nations as the Lord's people; this elevates the gospel in the general esteem of mankind, and thus gives it unbounded influence, a fact which is essentially equivalent to exalting the Great Head and King of Zion and embellishing his person most gorgeously with bridal ornaments. The phrase, "The bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments," alludes in the Hebrew to the splendid turban or head-dress worn by the High Priest.

11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

This verse confirms the construction given to verse 10. "For" (a logical connection) the Lord has ordained that righteousness and praise shall spring up with a vigorous and sure growth before all the nations, even as the warm bosom of the earth pushes forward the seed planted therein to germination, growth and fruitage. The gospel is to be an effective and glorious moral power for the regeneration of society and of human hearts in all the ends of the earth!—In this the Messiah rejoices with exceeding great joy. This is the fruit in which he will be satisfied as the reward for the travail of his soul. It is something to us to know what his heart really craves and will rejoice in, for precisely this, his own Father proposes to give. This universal victory of truth and righteousness is the "joy set before him" (as this prophecy plainly shows), "for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." See Heb. 12:2.

## CHAPTER LXII.

APPARENTLY this chapter continues the same subject, resuming it where the previous chapter closed. If so, then the Messiah is the speaker, expressing his untiring zeal and unflagging interest in this promised glorious enlargement of Zion. He will never rest till it be fully accomplished (v. 1); what it shall be in its fullness; how it shall affect the honor and glory of the true church; the accession of the Gentiles; the love felt for the cause of God and of truth—stand forth under various figures (vs. 2-5). So also how the Messiah commissions his spiritual watchmen (vs. 6, 7); what the Lord hath solemnly sworn as to the future protection and safety of his people (vs. 8, 9); a command to Gentile nations to prepare to come into Zion and the proclamation to this effect, going forth to the ends of the earth (vs. 10, 11). United with the former Zion, they become known every where as the holy people, the Lord's redeemed, a city never more forsaken (v. 12).

1. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp *that* burneth.

There can be no reasonable doubt that chap. 61, presents the personal Messiah in the first three verses, defining the nature and the special objects of his mission, viz., succor to the helpless; salvation to the perishing; and in the two closing verses, expressing his sublime joy in his assurance of ultimate success in filling the wide earth with the power and glory of his salvation. This hope and joy rest on the promises of God. See Ps. 2: 8; "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen," etc. As conditions for the fulfillment of these promises, there is labor to be done and prayer to be made. In the opening of this chapter, the Messiah expresses his purpose to fulfill these conditions. His whole heart is in this work and he will prosecute it with untiring energy and unflagging zeal till it be accomplished. I see no occasion therefore to doubt that the Messiah is truly the speaker in this passage. The division of chapters should not



interrupt the flow of thought, for originally these chapters (61 and 62) were one continuous discourse. The division was made not by Isaiah, but at a period long subsequent, and only for more convenient reference to its various parts. If there were in the grammatical connection or on other grounds any serious objection to the view that the Messiah is himself directly the speaker here, the next best construction would make the speaker the prophet himself, yet not speaking in his own behalf alone, but for all the friends of God and of his cause, including the Messiah pre-eminently as the head of the church and first in all its sympathies, sacrifices, and great moral labors.—“Will not hold my peace,” seems to refer legitimately to prayer, yet preaching may be included. That our Lord while with his church in person gave himself earnestly to prayer, and specifically to prayer for the success of his gospel work, stands out prominently in the inspired narrative; *e. g.*, on that eventful night before he commissioned the twelve, of which it is said (Luke 6 : 12) “that he went out into a mountain to pray, and *continued all night in prayer to God* ;” and “when it was day, he called unto him his disciples, and of them chose twelve whom he called apostles.” Matthew implies this same prayerful interest by connecting this choice of the twelve with his deep compassion when he saw the multitudes as sheep with no shepherd, and said, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9 : 36–38, and 10 : 1.)—The last of the evangelists has preserved for us an entire chapter of prayer (John 17) as a specimen of his imploring supplications for his cause and his people.—Need I speak of his untiring labors during his public ministry on earth? His considerate disciples often thought it marvelous and almost suicidal that he literally “gave himself no rest,” and often no time to eat bread. But he quietly replied, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (John 4 : 32). “I have a work to do” (John 9 : 4); “and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” Luke 12 : 50.—In such a spirit he lived and labored while yet in mortal flesh. Can it be doubted that in these points his heart is the same since his ascension to heaven as before? Did he not intend to leave an example on earth that should perpetually illustrate the interest he feels and the work he performs now that he fills the throne of the universe on high? “All power,” said he, “is given to me in heaven and on earth ;” and here he shows his people how he wields it for the salvation of Zion. “Go ye, said he, “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ;” and here he testifies how warmly he sympathizes and how intensely he lives in all the efforts his people make for the spread of this gospel and the glory of his name, pledging his sympathizing and energizing presence with them to the end of the

world (Mat. 28 : 18-20.)—"Righteousness" and "salvation" often appear in the parallel clauses of Isaiah ; yet we need not assume an absolute identity of meaning. Strictly they stand related as cause and effect—moral integrity and uprightness, the cause—and salvation under the righteous moral government of God, the effect.—It is remarkable that the highest style of true piety on earth often appears in the prophets under the term "righteousness." Nothing could more impressively evince the value which God sets upon full obedience to the second table of the law as the legitimate evidence of sincerity in obeying the first.—The consummation so desirable for which the Messiah prays and labors so unceasingly, is that the moral and religious life of the church may shine forth abroad over the earth as brightness itself, and that her salvation from sin, perhaps including also her moral force unto the salvation of others, may be a blazing lamp, truly a "light in the world." The same sentiment is expressed in the verse previous (61 : 11) by saying, "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."—The Messiah desires this consummation "for Zion's sake," for the love he bears to Zion, and because of his desire for her welfare and glory. But this contemplates not merely the old Zion in her narrow limits, but also and especially the new and enlarged Zion which imbosoms the nations of the earth. He thinks of these vast accessions to her numerical force, as well as also of her greatly augmented purity and moral power.

2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

What is distinctly said in chap. 60 : 3, is obviously implied here. Not only shall the Gentiles see the light and glory of Zion's Christianity, but they shall also come to it. The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." The Messiah labors and prays that they may see it, to the end that, seeing, they may admire, and admiring, be attracted within the pale of her influence, and into like relations to her glorious Redeemer.—"Called by a new name" is equivalent to actually reaching a new and higher character and more glorious relations to God. Name, here as when spoken of God, contemplates not so much a designation by which one may be distinguished from others, as the possession of special qualities of character and the existence of special relations. What this new name indicates the passage proceeds shortly to show (see v. 4). That this new name comes from God indicates that he himself gives her these qualities and relations.

3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

The sentiment of this verse I take to be, Thou shalt be an object of superb and glorious beauty, enjoying the infinite protection and love of thy God.—The crown, especially the royal diadem, is the highest earthly type of whatever is splendid, gorgeous, glorious. The church is such in God's hand.—This crown is not *upon his head*; that would be incongruous. It does not appear in this verse as placed on any one's head. But her being such a crown *in the hand* of her God, may signify perhaps that her beauty is his handiwork—her righteousness, the fruit of his spiritual creation; and yet the most obvious and prominent suggestion is rather that she is there in the beauty and glory which he gives her, enjoying his unfailing protection and undying love.

4. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

It is remarkable that of the four analogous descriptive terms applied in this verse to Zion, our translators have translated the first two and have merely transferred from the Hebrew the last two. The reason of this diversity probably was that the prophet himself translates the last two, but not the first two.—It may be assumed that they were all female names in use among the Hebrews, all significant of ideas pertinent to Zion in her new and better state. See the first name in 1 Kings 22: 42, and the third in 2 Kings 21: 1.—Transferring these names uniformly, and appending to each its translation, the verse would read, "Thou shalt no more be called Azubah" [Forsaken], "nor shall thy land any more be called Shammah" [Desolate]; "but thou shalt be called Hephzibah" [my delight is in her] "and thy land Beulah" [married]; "for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."—Shall be named or termed, means, shall really be. Zion shall be no more "forsaken" as she had been (60: 15, and 49: 14, and 54: 6, 7), nor "desolate" as she had been said to be (54: 1), but shall be the special *delight* of the Lord, this name being one of peculiar endearment. Her land shall be "married" in the sense of being permanently and by the highest right *possessed*, held by her sons and daughters under an indefeasible title. The original idea of this verb rendered "married" is that of absolute possession, here doubtless with the accessory idea of attachment, love.

5. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The expression just given of the term "married" reflects the sense of the Hebrew word, which is to be encountered, of the same meaning, in the Bible as a young man does a virgin. The Hebrew conception of marriage gave more prominence to this idea of possession than accords fully with our modern views. The sense here is that as a young man takes a virgin as his own with the thought of permanently made promises as well as that of loving and cherishing to his children—not the sons more than the daughters—take her to their very heart, loving and cherishing her interests and welfare with enduring affection.—Since v. 4 refers distinctly to "my land" as married, we must think of Canaan as being embodied in the ancient Hebrew heart—God's land of promise and here a sort of representative or type of the ideal Zion which, poetically considered, needed a "local habitation and a name"—The last clause represents God's own tender and enduring love for his people, comparing it to the joyful love of the bridegroom for his bride.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence,

7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Legitimately the speaker here should be the same as in v. 1, and the function of setting watchmen on Zion's walls belongs appropriately to him. It would be entirely out of place for any prophet to say of himself, I have set watchmen on thy walls. Ezekiel has the figure of a watchman in the sense of a religious teacher or pastor (chaps. 3: 17, and 33: 7).—Conceiving of Zion under the type of the ancient city of Jerusalem, watchmen on her walls very happily represent the work of those Christian teachers whom the Lord appoints in his church to act under himself, to guard the religious life of the people and to watch for souls.—But the special point here is that they shall never hold their peace, even as the Messiah declares of himself (v. 1), "I will not hold my peace;" "I will not rest," until Zion's righteousness shall go forth as brightness. This is therefore essentially His command to his gospel ministers to imbue their souls with his quenchless spirit of zeal, love and labor, and to prosecute their work as he does his.—A second descriptive epithet is, "Ye that make mention of the Lord," literally, "Ye that remind the Lord," or call things to his remembrance. The verb in its simple form means to remember; in the form used here, to *cause* to remember, i. e., to remind. A case of similar usage, in the same form, appears chap. 43: 26. The sense I take to be, remind the Lord of his promises; plead them with importunate prayer; bring up the case of Zion with unceasing supplication.—Remarkably the Messiah not only declares his

purpose to do this very thing but enjoins his spiritual watchman to do the same—to be instant and importunate in prayer until the great blessings promised to Zion shall have been fully, gloriously bestowed.—The antithesis between the last clause of v. 6 and the first in v. 7 is not so distinct in our English version as it might have been. Literally it is, “Give no rest to yourselves and give no rest to him,” the same word for “rest” being used in both clauses. The word means specially the rest of silence, and might be read, Let there be no silence to you, and allow no silence to him. The word rest however, understood as opposed to energetic activity, gives the sense well.—The ultimate work which they implore God to do is to establish and make Jerusalem a *praise* in the earth, a glorious thing, an object of admiration, a permanent and honored moral power for the salvation of the Gentiles.

8. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn *to be* meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured :

9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

The form of this oath is in the peculiar Hebrew idiom, but specially emphatic and solemn. Literally it is not, “Surely I will no more give,” etc., but “*If* I shall any more give” etc., then (the implication is) I am no longer God. It will be because I have not power to prevent it. The point of the affirmation is that Zion shall be pillaged and devoured by her enemies no more. Those who cultivate her corn and wine shall enjoy the fruits thereof, especially in the sacred temple service.—Those ancient incursions of plunderers were permitted of God in judgment for her sins. Now she sins no more, and God therefore shields her against such calamities. Under images drawn from her ancient history, the Lord predicts her future purity and prosperity.

10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

On this verse the first and most vital question exegetically is, *Who* are the people whose way is to be prepared, and for whom a standard is to be lifted up on high?—There can be but one answer; *The Gentile nations*. This is the legitimate and almost universal usage of the original word. This view is also supported and indeed confirmed by several closely parallel passages in this part of Isaiah, and by the general tenor of these later prophecies [chaps. 40—66]. The special parallels are chap. 57: 14, and 40: 3–9.

V. 11, here is so closely analogous to the passage (chap. 40: 9, 10) as to leave no reasonable doubt of their reference to the same subject.—Moreover this view of the passage is in perfect harmony with its context. As we have seen, the course of thought here is of prayer and labor for the extension and purity of Zion, for the conversion of the Gentiles and the glory of Christ's kingdom in this world. The Messiah has given the strongest expressions of his devotion to this work, and has summoned his watchmen to the same pure and unceasing devotion. Now in harmony with this line of thought, this verse exhorts the whole church to take away every obstacle to the return of Gentile converts into Zion. "Go forth from your city gates; prepare the highway; elevate it well; clear out the stones; and then raise aloft the gospel banner toward which those Gentile hosts may direct their steps as they come to Zion."

11. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

See chap. 40: 9, 10 and notes there. The Lord sends forth his proclamation to the end of the world because it is to be a matter of profound interest to all Gentile nations that God is announcing to his Zion the coming of her Savior, who moreover comes not in vain, but with success made sure. His reward is always in hand, so certain is it made by divine covenant and promise.—"Work" has here also the sense of *reward* of his work, the expected and desired result.

12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

All the Gentiles may be included under the word "they," as acknowledging that the people of Zion are a holy people, redeemed of the Lord, a city no longer neglected but sought out; no longer a forsaken thing, but never forsaken more.



## CHAPTER LXIII.

AMID the glowing descriptions of Zion's purity, enlargement, and triumph, through which the prophet has borne us in the four chapters next preceding this; there have been brief intimations of hostile powers and of God's visitations of retribution upon them; e. g. chap. 59: 18—"He will repay fury to his adversaries, re-

compense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense." Also, chap. 60: 12. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Here in vs. 1-6 this subject is resumed for a more distinct and full presentation. Remarkably this passage is the counterpart of chap. 34, in the earlier prophecies. Here as there, Edom is the representative of the malignant, determined enemies of Zion. Here as there, the divine Avenger and Redeemer of Zion goes forth in the might of his strength, and the blood of the slain fills the foreground of the picture—here, staining all his raiment; there, making his sword drunk with blood, and washing the mountain sides with torrents of gore. This description is the more brief, as might be expected in a case of renewed mention, the writer assuming that the reader will readily recall what he had already said on the same subject.—With v. 7 a new subject is commenced which fills the remaining portion of this chapter and also chap. 64. The prophet sees the true Zion as she stood historically during the age immediately preceding the first advent of Christ, struggling up through scenes of blended affliction and sin, under an almost crushing sense of ill-desert and unworthiness, grasping the promises of God in faith and prayer, and gathering strength from his past mercies. Hence it abounds with most earnest expostulations, importunate pleadings, and precious allusions to God's manifestations of mercy in former ages.

1. Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

The prophet asks the question; the personage who responds may best be regarded as the Messiah himself. The prominence given to his person in chaps. 59: 20, 21, and 60: 1-3, and 61: 1-3, 10, 11, and 62: 1, 6, 11, makes this construction almost necessary. The course of thought and the logic of the context demand it. Then it is entirely in harmony with the spirit of other Messianic prophecies, *e. g.*, Ps. 2 and 110; and with the doctrine of the New Testament, *e. g.*, Matt. 28: 18, and its numerous parallel passages; also with Rev. 19: 11-21.—In this prophetic vision the scenes of slaughter are recently past and the Great Redeemer and Avenger of his people is seen returning from the fearful carnage—his garments scarlet-dyed, blood-stained; himself marching in triumph as a conqueror returning with renewed consciousness of power from a victorious conflict with his foes. The prophet cries, Who is this, so glorious in his apparel, so majestic in his mien? The answer reveals him, "I that speak *in righteousness*," saying only with truth and doing only in justice—doing in the way of just retribution all that I have threatened for deliverance to my people and for destruction to my incorrigible foes.—"Mighty to save"

gives prominence to the idea that these judgments on Edom were demanded by the interests of salvation to his people, and should by no means be accounted causeless or revengeful.—“Bozrah” is used here for Edom as a whole.—For the reasons why Edom is chosen to represent all earthly powers hostile to Christ’s kingdom, see notes on Isaiah 34.

2. Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?

3. I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people *there was* none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

4. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

The orientals crushed their grapes for wine with the foot, thus staining their garments with the red juice of the grape. This furnishes the figure in our passage. So the Messiah will tread down his foes and come back from their slaughter having his robes of victory stained with the blood of the slain.—The phrases, “The day of vengeance” and “the year of my redeemed,” occur above, chap. 61: 4. The time had come to deliver his redeemed, and consequently to take vengeance on their persistent enemies.—That this day of vengeance is *in his heart* implies, not that he enjoys vengeance for its own sake, but that he feels the obligation to be imperative upon him, and accepts the solemn responsibility.—That he “treads the wine-press *alone*” seems to stand specially opposed to all help from those who are not included among his own friends. The term “people” [of the *people*, there was none with me”] usually designates heathen nations. The idea probably is that they were all against him; none of them on his side. V. 5 reiterates this idea with some new aspects.—Wine-fat is the old Saxon for “vat;” here, the tub or trough in which grapes were trodden.—In the last clause of v. 4, the Hebrew seems to carry out the figure; “Their juice shall spirt upon my garments,” etc.

5. And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It seems to be tacitly implied that in a case where public jus-



tice so loudly demands penal retribution, the Great Avenger of his abused people might reasonably expect some one to appear to help and uphold him in administering just punishment. Finding none, he clothes his own arm with power and renews his purpose with fresh zeal—and the work is done! The sentiment taught here is that Jesus Messiah is equal by himself alone to the exigencies of righteous retribution upon the guilty nations of men. His people never need fear any failure in the resources of his power, whether to save themselves, or to destroy his unrepentant foes.—In v. 6, “make them drunk in my fury,” is the conception of the wine-cup of the Lord’s indignation which he passes round for guilty nations to drink, to madden them for self-destruction. In Jeremiah (25: 15–31) this conception is fully expanded. It appears frequently and with great pertinence and force in other prophets.—In the last clause of v. 6, the figure is still kept up. “I will bring down their juice (grape-juice) to the earth.” The word translated in the English version, “strength,” is the same which appears in v. 3, translated there, their “blood,” but meaning in both cases, their *juice*, they being thought of as grapes trodden under the feet.

Several of the phrases in this passage (vs. 1–6) are often appropriated and applied by Christians to Jesus Christ in reference to his atoning death and the spiritual salvation of his people; *e. g.*, “mighty to save;” “I have trodden the wine press alone.” There is no special objection to this use of Scripture language by way of accommodation, provided always that no violence be done to its sense in the passage where it stands, and that no inferences are drawn from this true sense save such as are legitimate. But whoever should interpret this prophecy as referring to the atonement would wrest the word of God from its true sense. He might or might not in this particular case deduce from it positive error; but he certainly opens a door which naturally lets in far more error than truth.—This passage proves that Christ is mighty to save his people *by destroying their enemies*. From this the inference is entirely legitimate that he is mighty to save them in every possible relation—against every sort of foe. The former however is the thing here affirmed. The latter comes from it by inference only.

7 I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

The portion that follows, to the end of chap. 64, treats of Zion’s sins and sufferings; her struggles of faith and prayer; and her reminiscences of God’s mercies, called up to revive her spiritual strength.

Remarkably the passage begins with this view of past mercies. The verb, "I will mention," is the same which occurred in chap. 62: 6, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" and means either to recall to one's own mind, or to call up to the mind of another, *i. e.*, to *remind*. Either sense is admissible here; I will recall to my own mind to quicken my faith in God; or I will recall to the Lord's mind, suggesting to him his former mercies and pleading them as a ground for renewed mercies in the future.—The passage commencing here is supposed by many interpreters to refer specially to the restoration from Babylon. I do not accept this view; but shall have occasion to refer to it as we proceed, and therefore allude to it in the outset.

8. For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Saviour.

The word "*for*" is here without authority. The original is simply *and*, or *and then*, *i. e.*, in the exercise of his great mercy he said. The next word should be, not "surely" but only, *i. e.*, they *only* are my people; they and none other but they. Children that *should not* lie, in the sense of proving false to their covenant with me, their own Father. The passage does not imply that God knew they would not, nor does it predict that they will not, but only says that in view of the nature of the case, they *ought* not to lie to him in regard to their covenant.—"And so he became their Savior;" said with reference to the general course of his dealings with them, especially in their earlier history—in the Exodus, the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan.

9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

The first clause, as it stands in our English version, gives a good sense, and one which may possibly be the true sense; and yet the objections to it are somewhat strong, so that on the whole I prefer another sense equally true, equally pertinent in this connection, and more in accordance with the original text and the order in which the words stand. This preferred sense is, "In all their enmity" [*i. e.*, against me] "I was not an enemy to them," but followed them with loving-kindness and great compassion, seeking to do them good, despite of their hostility and abuse toward me.—The strong reasons for this latter construction are, (1.) It follows the Hebrew text instead of the Hebrew margin, and therefore has decidedly the greater authority in its favor as the true reading; and (2.) On the question at issue between the two constructions, the former being literally, *There was affliction to him*; and the latter, "Not an enemy was he," it should be said

that the word for affliction may mean calamity, pressing heavily; on an enemy, one who presses hard upon you for malign purposes. The test word therefore is one which the English translators understood to mean "to him" [there was affliction to him], or "he was afflicted;" but which the Hebrew text makes, *not*. In this conflict of various readings and consequent uncertainty as to the genuine text, Hebrew usage in regard to the order of collocation comes to our aid. The Hebrew negative, "*not*," always stands *before* the word which it qualifies, as it does here. The other word, however, corresponding to "*to him*," occurs repeatedly *after* the very word here used for affliction; there was *affliction to him*;" but is always placed after the word expressing affliction; *e. g.*, Ps. 18: 7, and 66: 14, and 69: 18, and 102: 3, and 106: 44. Hence the arguments from the textual reading and from the collocation of the words are strongly in favor of the construction proposed above. Maurer interprets thus; "In all his affliction, there was scarcely any real affliction to him, for the angel of his presence saved them."—The phrase, "The angel of his presence," leads the mind to that uncreated angel whose presence was guarantied to Moses in behalf of Israel and was manifested in the pillar of cloud and of fire throughout their journeyings in the wilderness. See Exodus 23: 20-23. "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, *for my name is in him*." He was therefore fitly styled "the angel of God's presence;" an angel because *sent* and the angel of God's presence because he was a manifestation of God. He was God's very presence. God was present *in him*, for this must be the legitimate sense of the phrase, "*My name is in him*."—The inspired record gives prominence very justly to this wonderful presence of God with his people Israel, *e. g.*, Ex. 14: 19. "And the angel of God which went [had gone] before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud [the visible manifestation of his presence] went from before their face and stood behind them." See also Ex. 33: 2, and Num. 20: 16. This same angel is identified with the presence of Jehovah and with Jehovah himself, Ex. 33: 12-23, and 34: 5-9; and also at the bush, Ex. 3: 2, 4-6.—It is quite to our purpose to note that the term "angel" and the phrase, "The angel of the Lord," are often applied to God as coming down and manifesting himself sensibly in vision or otherwise to his people. Thus Jacob had wondrous visions of God at Bethel (Gen. 28: 12-17), and though that personage was not called an angel in that passage, yet at a later period he said; "The angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel where thou anointedst the pillar," etc. (Gen. 31: 11, 13). Also at a still later period; "The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," etc. (Gen. 48: 16). In the same manner the Personage who appeared

to Moses at the bush is called "the angel of the Lord;" and yet he said, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;" who also gave his name, "I am that I am." Exodus 3: 2, 6, 14. Other proofs to the same point may be seen in Judges 13: 6, 9, 13, 15-21; and to the same purport, omitting the name angel, Joshua 5: 14, 15.—A careful examination of these and kindred passages in the Old Testament, coupled with New Testament allusions to them, will show most fully that the great Personage who revealed himself in the Old Testament ages, sometimes under the name, "The angel of the Lord," and often simply as "the Lord," was no other than the Messiah himself, the Son of God, "the brightness of the Father's glory," the great Revealer of God to man, and the supreme head of the church under the old economy no less truly though less palpably than under the new. It was he who saved them; who also bare them all the days of old as a tender mother carries in her arms her infant babe.

10. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

Of these rebellions the Old Testament history of their wilderness life and of their life in Canaan down to the reign of David, gives numerous and most painful examples.—The reader will especially note that in these rebellions, they "vexed his Holy Spirit." Does this mean merely that they vexed or grieved God because he is holy and therefore abhors sin? Or must we also assume here a reference to the distinct personality of the Spirit? The latter view is strongly supported by the inquiry which the reflecting Hebrews are supposed to make in v. 11; "Where is he who brought us through the Red Sea under the hand of Moses as the shepherd of his flock?" And, "Where is He that put his Holy Spirit within him"—the people? This form of expression assumes that God sends forth the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality, and causes him to dwell within the people.—This general mission of the Spirit takes a specific form in the case of the seventy elders (Num. 11: 17, 25), and also in the case of Bezaleel, the architect of the tabernacle (Exodus 31: 3, and 35: 31-35). But these cases are valuable chiefly as illustrations of the broad truth that God gives his Spirit to men as a Great Teacher and as a fountain of endowments and qualifications for the work he gives them to do. It comprehends also that vast field of moral instruction and influence in which God works in man toward his willing and doing unto salvation (Phil. 2: 13). To this we find allusion in Neh. 9: 20, "Thou gavest also thy Good Spirit to instruct them;" and in Hag. 2: 5, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear not." Stephen had his eye on the same great fact when

(Acts 7: 51) he charged it upon the hardened Jews of his time; "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; *as your fathers did*, so do ye." The Psalmist (78: 17, 40) presents the same view of the people's sin and of its bearings upon God, yet without any special reference to the personality of the Spirit. "They provoked the Most High in the wilderness." "How often did they provoke him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert!"—In general it will be observed that the sacred writers lay special and chief stress upon the flagrant, cruel sins of the people and upon the grief and trial which it occasioned to their covenant-keeping God. The personality of the Holy Spirit they refer to in a somewhat incidental way, as a truth indeed, yet a truth not then in controversy, and not perhaps deemed of relatively the greatest importance.—The people insulted and abused the Holy Spirit and thus brought on themselves fearful judgments. He who (as said in the previous verse) did not become their enemy at first, under their great provocations of enmity and hostility to him, yet turned at length to become their enemy in the sense of scourging and sorely chastising them ("fighting against them"), when they utterly repelled his spiritual agencies for their restoration. What else could a faithful God do for them? When his teaching Spirit was vexed and resisted, what remained but his teaching and scourging rod?

11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and* his people, *saying*, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?

The grammatical construction here involves special difficulties, inasmuch as the use of the singular number, "he remembered," and the immediate antecedent, "*he* fought" (v. 10) favor and almost demand that we refer the word "he" (before "remembered") to God. And yet the scope of the verse requires its reference to the people. It must surely be the people who thoughtfully recall the days of old and say, "Where is He that brought up Israel through the Red Sea, under Moses as their shepherd?" That this question is put by the people is made more certain by the complaint which the Lord makes in Jer. 2: 6; "Neither say they" (the people), "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?" etc.—To obviate these difficulties, some critics bring forward the word people (in the clause, "Moses and his *people*") and make it the subject of the verb, thus; "Then the people remembered the days of old, even Moses, *saying*" etc. This however is scarcely admissible on the score of grammatical construction. But the use of the singular "he" for the people is not very unusual. They are thought of collectively, as indeed they are in the last word of the verse, the pronoun "him" ("his Spirit within *him*," ) which represents the whole people.—The sentiment of the verse is that under the stern chastisements of the Lord, the peo-

ple returned to serious thought and inquired after the God who brought them out of Egypt and who had so mercifully given them his Spirit.

12. That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name?

13. That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, *that* they should not stumble?

These verses continue the thoughtful questions which the people propose to their own hearts as they think of the God of their fathers, the fountain of former mercies.—The last verb in v. 13 is future, thus; “Who marched them through the deeps; as a horse in the wilderness, so they *will not stumble*.” The prophet seems to see them moving forward; compares their advance to that of a horse marching sure-footed along the desert, and predicts with all confidence, “he will not stumble!” Under God’s guiding hand, all obstructions will be removed, and their course being wisely directed, they will not fail.

14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

Following the tenses closely, the course of thought in this verse may be expressed thus: “As beasts (tame animals of the flock or the herd) will go down into the valley for their repose; so the Spirit of the Lord will give him (Israel) rest;” *i. e.*, under his protection. “So, in this way, thou hast in all past ages led thy people to make for thyself a glorious name.”—This last clause generalizes the facts of the nation’s history, showing especially that God had wrought among them and for them to the end of glorifying his own name.—To “give Israel rest” is the usual phrase for locating them in Canaan after a whole generation of unrest in the wilderness. See Deut. 12: 9, 10, and Ps. 95: 11.—The English version might be understood to refer to the *beast* as caused to rest. The original forbids this, since “beast” (in Hebrew) is feminine, and the pronoun is not *her* but “*him*,” Israel.

15. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

In the original, only one question is asked, and that with the word “*where*.” Hence strictly the last clause should be read affirmatively, thus; Where are thy zeal and thy mighty deeds? The moaning of thy bowels and the yearning of thy compassions

toward me are restrained. —As usual, the bowels are thought of as the seat of the affections and sympathies. Even the word rendered "mercies" means primarily the bowels, the *soft* organs of the abdomen; so that in the Hebrew, there is not the same blending of literal and figurative terms which appears in the English version. In this, both are figurative.—The verse is an earnest appeal to God to look compassionately upon their woeful state, tenderly (not reproachfully) asking where his former interest in their behalf is now, and where those sublime manifestations of his power; and intimating that the outflow of his warm sympathies for them has been checked, restrained.

16. Doubtless thou *art* our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

The first two clauses which commence in the English version, "Doubtless," and "though," both commence in Hebrew with "*for*," thus: "*For* thou art our Father; *for* Abraham has not known us:" the logic being this; We make our plea and lift up our prayer thus before thee, *because* thou art our Father; and we must the more regard thee as our Father because Abraham is *not* our father—has never known us in this relation; neither doth Israel acknowledge us: Thou, *Jehovah*, the ever faithful One, art our Father and our Redeemer; thy name has been manifested to us as the true, the loving, the faithful God, even from of old.—Plainly then these persons do not come before God *as Jews*. At least they discard all reliance on the name of Abraham as of account for them before God. It cannot perhaps be inferred with absolute certainty that none in the body who here speak were lineal Jews. But it is quite certain that they do not claim Abraham to be their father in the sense of the Jews in the time of Christ. See Matt. 3: 9, and John 8: 33-59. These mean to say, Thou, O God, art *our only* Father. We rest upon no other. Our eye is unto thee alone.—This plea corresponds admirably to the feeling of the real church in that age of hopeful expectation and chastened faith which shortly preceded the Christian era. It does *not* correspond with any known manifestations of feeling among the Jewish people during their exile or in their restoration. The passage therefore goes to show that these chapters of Isaiah do not describe that exile or that restoration. The moral tone of the passage is precious. This spirit of discarding all other reliances and casting one's self on God alone, appealing with sole hope to his paternal compassion, cannot be too warmly cherished. "Blessed are all they who" so "put their trust in him."

17. O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy



ways, *and* hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

It is in every point of view preposterous, absurd and impious, to suppose that God makes men "wander from his ways" in the same active sense in which he turns them into his ways; or that he hardens their heart in the same sense in which he softens their heart by his Spirit or his providence. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" Doth the same God press and draw men toward both holiness and sin? Certainly the Scriptures do not mean to affirm this.—But they do use very strong language concerning that providential agency of God which permits temptation to occur and to have force enough to tempt men into sin. They speak of God as doing himself what he suffers to be done by other agencies than his own. See this subject discussed more fully in notes on chap. 6: 10.—In the last clause, the language, "the tribes of thine inheritance," is Jewish in its costume, yet can not be held as showing that the ideal speakers here are lineal Jews. It can not apply strictly to the time of the exile, because then the *tribes* were all lost save one, or were all merged into this one, Judah. The people of God, even in the gospel age, might use this language with historical reference to the form of the church in the earlier times.

18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

19. We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

It is difficult to determine the precise sense of v. 18. The clauses are manifestly elliptical. How to supply the ellipsis is the difficult problem.—Our English version rests the plea with God on the ground that his holy people have possessed it [the land, or the sanctuary] but a little while, and the enemy have trodden down the sanctuary—perhaps it would imply, a long time. But the first clause of v. 19 seems to me clearly to mean, "We are of old," we represent thine ancient people through the ages of the past. This seems to reverse the sentiments put into v. 18 by the English version, and to base the plea of the people with God on the ground that their enemies have no claim in God's land or in his temple, and that as the legitimate successors of God's ancient people, we have the covenant, the promises, and a clear title therefore to his special regard.—In harmony with this view of the argument, v. 18 may be read, "It is but a little while that they (the adversaries) have possessed thy holy people and trodden down thy sanctuary."—This construction of the Hebrew is very simple, and deviates scarcely at all from the order of the words; in noth-



ing, indeed, except in bringing forward the word "adversaries," as the subject of the first verb as well as the second. The precise Hebrew order is, "For a little while have they possessed the holy people, adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary."—In v. 19, the word "thine" in italics, has no corresponding Hebrew word. On the other hand, the Hebrew has it precisely, "We are *of old*," i. e., from the earliest ages. This does indeed amount ultimately to saying, "We are *thine*," but it affirms this on a special ground, viz., of long-standing relationship. This was not true of their enemies. Thou didst not bear rule over them; hast never given them thy holy law, nor administered thy special providential government over them as over us. Thy name has not been called upon them.—The drift of this plea is to remind the Lord of his past relations to his church, in broad distinction from any relation of his to their enemies, presenting this as a reason why he should appear now most signally in their behalf.



## CHAPTER LXIV.

THIS chapter continues and completes the course of thought which commences with chap. 63: 7. This portion is prayer throughout, blending intercession with confession of sin. The prophet expresses sentiments, feelings, prayers, adapted to the case of the true church, the few found faithful among the many faithless, in the age next before the coming of their Messiah. They see the Jewish nation as such about to be disowned of God as his people and doomed to ruin; and their trembling hearts cry out; Must the real Zion perish too? Will not our own Redeeming Father interpose to save?—We can readily see that the truly pious of those times must have been sorely tried and thrown back upon their own faithful God as their only hope. They could not see how the Jewish nation could fall and Zion not fall with it. Hence this struggle of soul in imploring yet humble supplication.

1. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

In the Hebrew Bibles this verse stands at the close of the previous chapter. The division in our English version is better. Still better than either would be no division at all between these chapters. The course of thought is unbroken.—In the last clause, the verb translated, "flow down," according to both etymology and usage, should mean, quake. It occurs Judges 5: 5.

In favor of the sense *flow* is the probable allusion to the scenes at Sinai when the Lord came down there, of which it is said (Pa. 97: 5), "The hills *melted* like wax at the presence of the Lord." Also the comparison which immediately follows here (v. 2). Either sense gives an expressive figure to represent the majesty and glory of Jehovah's presence; in the one case, quaking with fear; in the other, dissolving and flowing away as if powerless to stand and aghast at his presence.—The prayer, "O that thou wouldest rend the heavens," conceives of God as having been quietly reposing above the sky although his people were in an agony of want for his help, and therefore implores him to break through, cleaving the concave heavens asunder to make a way for his coming in glorious majesty.

2. As *when* the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, *that* the nations may tremble at thy presence?

Translated as closely as the difference in idiom will allow, this verse would read, "As fire burns brush-wood—as fire will make waters boil—to make thy name known to thine enemies: the nations will tremble before thee."—The prayer is, So wilt thou come down to make known thy name [power and glory] to thine enemies, even with majesty analogous to the power and splendor of fire.

3. When thou didst terrible things *which* we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

The English Bible makes this verse a historical statement, referring to certain scenes in their past history not clearly identified. I prefer another construction which follows the course of thought (the prayer) in the context more closely, and also the legitimate demands of the syntax, thus; "In doing terrible things which we can not anticipate, O that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might quake [or flow down] at thy presence!" Connecting it closely with the preceding verse, we might read, O that thou wouldest come down to make thy name known to thine adversaries; [then v. 3] even to do terrible things which we shall not look for [being beyond our highest anticipation]; O! come down that the mountains may melt [or quake] before thee!—The verb translated, "looked not for," is future and seems to demand the construction here given. The verb, "come down," is not only the same verb but the same form of it as in v. 1, and therefore should come under the force of the optative particle, which would make it prayer.

4. For since the beginning of the world *men* have not

heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

The marginal reading follows the original more precisely, and is altogether the more easy and natural translation, thus; "From of old men have not heard, nor have they perceived through the ear, nor hath the eye seen a God besides thee who will do [or can do] so for one waiting upon him."—The verb "do" may be made emphatic; who can *do*, *i. e.*, can *accomplish*, so effectively for his waiting servants, for any one who waits in humble trust upon him. "Prepared," in the English version, does not well represent the original. The sense is, No other God has been heard of or seen since the world began who will do such things for his waiting people; none who has such power to do; none who has such a heart to do; none who has shown himself in fact so mighty to save. This thought comes in here, inspiring confidence in regard to the prayer just offered.—Paul (1 Cor. 2: 9) uses a part of the language of this verse to express the fact that certain great truths of the gospel had remained unknown, a mystery, until Christ's coming. In the same way, quotations are sometimes made from classic authors by borrowing the words only and not the thought of the author quoted from.

5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Of this verse there have been an indefinite number of diverse interpretations. I propose only to define my own.—The first verb, "Thou meetest," is used for hostile as well as friendly meeting; but the case here requires the latter. Thou meetest *with favor* him who joyfully does right; *i. e.*, who does righteousness not under compulsion but of his free will, as one who loves it. A further description of this class is that they *remember God as to his ways*. A case in illustration of this remembrance of God is that of Habakkuk in his third chapter, calling to mind the ancient ways of God so grandly and with such effective moral power upon his own soul. Also the writer of Ps. 77. See vs. 10–20, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," etc. The thought is, who nourish their faith by recalling to mind God's ways of mercy and power for his people.—The middle clause, fairly translated, reads, "Thou hast been wroth, and we have sinned," *i. e.*, have deserved thine anger.—The last clause has been found most difficult. I

take the sense to be; "In those" [ways of thy mercy] "there is continuance;" they have continued long; they are to be perpetuated. We may presume upon the same glorious policy of loving kindness and great mercy in the future which we have seen in the past, and therefore "*we shall be saved.*" Literally the statement is, "In those ways there is an eternity;" they are to stand while the world stands. They can not be short-lived; we need not fear lest they be exhausted.—The general strain of thought is richly hopeful. God will surely meet with interposing mercy the faithful few who truly love righteousness, known by their affectionate, trustful remembrance of God's ways. Although the sins of our nation (the Jews) have drawn down upon us the divine anger, and the nation as such must perish; yet God's ways of mercy are to endure onward through the coming ages, and the true Zion will be gloriously saved. *God's plans of saving mercy take time.* Blessed are all they that wait till their time shall have come. Let us thoughtfully recall the past and so refresh our faith for the more glorious future.

6. But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7. And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Again the prophet, speaking for the faithful few, confesses and deplors the prevailing wickedness of the nation. Almost literally, their sins had been a tornado to sweep the nation away. Compare chap. 57 : 13, and Job 27 : 21. The most fatal fact in their condition was that no men of prayerful interceding spirit remained. There was no one who roused himself up to take strong hold upon God in prayer.—Nothing can so surely presage the ruin of a nation as this prayerlessness, this lack of praying souls to intercede as Moses did (Ex. 32 : 31, 32) and Samuel (1 Sam. 7 : 8, and 12 : 16-25) and Daniel (chap. 9) for their people.

8. But now, O LORD, thou *art* our Father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand.

Here as in chap. 63 : 16, "Our Father," looks rather to his spiritual than to his physical creatorship, recognizing God not so much as the author of our physical being as the Savior of our souls from sin by his regenerating grace and by his spiritual

power generally. In the language of the prophets as well as in the New Testament, redeemed souls are called "the work of God's hands." See chaps. 19 : 25, and 29 : 23, and 45 : 11, and 60 : 21, as also Eph. 2 : 10. This need not be pressed so as to preclude human agency in conversion. It does affirm and make prominent divine agency, as it should in accordance with the facts of the case.—That we are as clay and the Lord God our potter, illustrates in figure the same great truth, God's effective and indispensable agency in every conversion and in all the spiritual life that ever exists in fallen human souls.—Elsewhere, *e. g.*, Isaiah 29 : 16, and 45 : 9, this figure of the potter and his clay is used to set forth the perverseness of human guilt and folly in denying God's creatorship and man's consequent moral responsibility to his Maker ; while in Jer. 18 : 6, and Rom. 9 : 20, 21, the same figure illustrates a like spirit in man toward God contemplated as the providential Ruler and Disposer of the destinies of nations.—In the passage before us, the special point is, God working in man morally and spiritually toward and unto his regeneration and salvation. These precious relations of spiritual children are used here as a ground of plea with God for sustaining mercy.

9. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we *are* all thy people.

This plea that God would abate and turn from his manifested displeasure, rests on the same ground as above, "*We are all thy people.*" We are thine own Zion. We represent all there is of thy church and kingdom on earth. Save us therefore for thine own sake. Also whatever piety there may be in our souls is the fruit of thine own work. Spare us for this reason. Have a regard to the work of thine own hands.

10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

These verses are appealed to and relied upon more than any other in these later prophecies of Isaiah to prove that the writer must have lived during the exile in Babylon, after the destruction of the temple and of the holy city. In the introduction to these later prophecies I have presented what seem to me most decisive reasons for rejecting this view of the age and person of the author.—The inference drawn from this passage to prove the theory of a second Isaiah living near the close of the exile,

may be readily disposed of by either of the two following suppositions. (1.) That Isaiah is representing the case of the faithful few remaining among the chosen people during the period after the exile and before the Messiah's advent, and therefore takes up the fall of their city and the loss of their original temple, known to him as actual events because seen as past in prophetic vision, and uses them to illustrate forcibly the broken prostrate condition of the ancient theocracy, the entire Mosaic system;—or, (2.) That without special reference to historic facts, he uses the supposed fall of their city and temple as figures to represent the ruined state of Zion. Such figures would have been entirely legitimate then; they are so even to us now. We might fitly represent the condition of a dying church by saying, "Its holy city is a wilderness; its temple lies in ashes; all its beauteous things are a desolation." —In sentiment, the low and almost dying state of the ancient Zion, considered as in the Jewish nation, is made the plea for interposing mercy.

12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these *things*, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

In view of all these things, wilt thou, O Lord, still shut up thy bowels of compassion; hold thy tender sympathies under stern constraint, and still go on to afflict us even to extremity? —What God will do in answer to these imploring supplications, will appear in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER LXV.

THE first verse manifestly affirms that God is sought and found by the Gentiles. Then the discourse turns to the case of the unbelieving and fearfully wicked Jews who as a nation are cut off in their sins (vs. 2-7) a remnant only being saved (vs. 8-10). The apostates and their doom appear again (vs. 11, 12) in contrast with the Lord's chosen (vs. 13-16); after which follows a magnificent description of the Christian age and its ultimate results of peace and purity, and of glorious victory over sin and Satan (vs. 17-25).

1. I am sought of *them that* asked not for me; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.

The first verb, rendered "sought," means, to be inquired of,

or inquired after. I have been sought unto *in prayer* by people who never asked of me before. The verb occurs in this sense Ezek. 14 : 3, and 20 : 3, and 36 : 37.—The next verb, “sought” [“that sought me not”] is not the same Hebrew word, but one of more general signification.—I said, “Behold me,” in the sense, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth” (chap. 45 : 22), unto a nation [the word meaning a *Gentile* nation] which had never before borne my name as my people.—Paul quotes both this verse and the next (Rom. 10 : 20, 21), as predicting the conversion of the Gentiles and the long-suffering patience of God toward the unbelieving Jews.—Since the reference of this verse to the Gentiles at the opening of the Christian age admits of no doubt, it becomes a *landmark* to guide in the interpretation of the whole chapter, and indeed of the previous context also. This fact precludes the theory which applies this portion of Isaiah to the exile at Babylon and the restoration from it; and also that theory which applies these chapters to some supposed restoration of the Jews yet future.

2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts.

In the later prophets and especially in Jeremiah, great stress is laid upon the reiterated and long protracted efforts of the Lord to reclaim his sinning people. See Jer. 7 : 24–28, and 25 : 3–7, and 26 : 5, and 29 : 17–19, and 44 : 4, 5.—Such persistent entreaty may well be expressed by stretching out the hand imploringly all the day.—The “thoughts” which they walked after were their plans and devices; their chosen courses of sin.

3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick.

4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable *things* is in their vessels.

Provoking God *to his face* seems to mean, with daring and reckless impiety, insulting him in his very presence.—It is remarkable that precisely the same Hebrew words appear in the first of the ten commandments; “Thou shalt have no other gods *before my face* ;” in my presence; brought up before me to insult me to my very face. The people here spoken of were flagrantly violating this first command.—The sacrificing in gardens, etc., pertains to idol worship. The phrases here used descriptive of idol worship seem to be applied to the Jews at a period near the Christian era, yet not to imply that they were

then guilty of precisely these forms of sin, but only in general, of very flagrant sin, which idol worship might fitly represent. The prophet describes their sin by giving it the name of the prevalent and most outrageous sins of his own time.—The particular customs alluded to, *e. g.*, “remaining in or among the graves,” etc., are now little known. Whether idolaters lay there as a means of intercourse, hopeful or pretended, with the spirits of the dead; whether they eat swine’s flesh after it had been offered in sacrifice to idols, or in simple contempt of the Mosaic law; these and numerous other like questions, it would be of small account to attempt to answer.

5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

This sanctimonious bigotry, “Keep to thyself,” paints strongly the ostentatious, exclusive, uncharitable spirit of the Pharisees of our Savior’s time.—As the word rendered “nose,” legitimately means “anger,” according to the English margin, and as the parallel clause, “a fire that burneth all the day,” can not well be said of that which is merely disagreeable (like smoke), it is better to give both clauses this sense: They are [shall become] as smoke under my anger; a fire burning all the day; *i. e.*, they shall be surely consumed in the fierceness of my displeasure.—So God doomed the proud sanctimonious hypocrites of the Savior’s time. The event shortly fulfilled the fearful prediction.

6. Behold, *it* is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

This is strongly in the tone of retribution.—“*Written before me,*” in the sense of being fixed, determined upon. The next clause gives at least the substance of this determined purpose, if not the very words.—“Keep silence,” is a frequent expression in this prophet to represent inaction and apparent indifference on the part of God. See chaps. 42: 14, and 57: 11.—The phrase, “recompense *into their bosom,*” is thought to come from the oriental usage of drawing up a loose garment (a vail or a mantle) so as to form a capacious sack at the bosom into which articles might be poured. Thus Boaz said to Ruth,



“Bring the vail that thou hast upon thee and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her” (Ruth 3: 15).—The language here indicates that the national guilt of several successive generations was at length visited upon one. “I will recompense into *their* bosom” (*i. e.*, the last and the doomed one of the series) “your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together”—the latter phrase, “Your fathers,” probably including more than one generation. This accords precisely with the view given of this very case by our divine Lord (Matt. 23: 32, 35, 36); “Fill ye up the measure of your fathers” (*i. e.*, the measure of their guilt); “that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar; verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”—Thus the “former works” of that guilty nation were measured back into the bosom of the one most guilty generation, last in the series.—Thus often the long-suffering of God waits upon a guilty nation with amazing patience, pressing every available and wise appliance to reclaim them until they prove themselves utterly, hopelessly incorrigible. Then an avalanche of ruin sweeps them away. So the Roman sword fell on that guilty city and nation. It was God’s retribution “poured into their bosom.”—Their sin is described (here as in vs. 3, 4), in phrases drawn from the giant sins of the prophet’s own age: burning incense on the mountains; blaspheming God upon the hills.

8. Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sake, that I may not destroy them all.

As when one cluster, well ripened, juicy and good for wine, appears among many bad, and one says, Do not destroy that, for a blessing is in it; so God will spare the little remnant of faithful ones, and not make an utter destruction of the Jewish nation.—In precise fulfillment of this prediction, the little band of Jewish disciples, warned by their divine Master (Matt. 24: 15, 16) escaped to the mountains beyond the Jordan and fell not with the fated city. In general it may be said, all the Jews who turned to God were saved; the rest perished in vast numbers.—That a special blessing came of saving the one good cluster among the many poor, may have been a current belief and perhaps a proverb.

9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

So God will bless the faithful few. The costume is thoroughly Jewish. They come out of Jacob and Judah, for the discourse refers primarily to the Christian converts from among the Jews. They become a "*seed*" analogous to the posterity of Abraham. They inherit the Lord's "mountains," the hills of Palestine. Two representative valleys are named, the former in the western section, and the latter in the eastern, as homes for flocks and herds, all indicating prosperity and happiness according to Hebrew ideas.—In such a connection I see no good reason for construing these verses to teach a literal restoration of the Jews to Palestine at some time yet future. Such a construction is entirely out of harmony with the drift of the entire passage, beginning chap. 63 : 7, and continuing without change of the general subject to this point.—This passage most clearly refers to the great events that clustered about the change from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, the extreme guilt of the Jewish nation as a whole and their destruction, coupled with the salvation of the penitent and believing portion—the last point being the subject of remark here. Then furthermore, it is entirely legitimate and fully sustained by prophetic usage to explain these verses as the common Jewish costume by which the prophets speak in figures drawn from their own people and times.

11. But ye *are* they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.

The discourse turns back once more to the reprobate portion of the Jews.—The words rendered "troop" and "number," which are transferred into the English margin without translation ("Gad" and "Meni"), are admitted universally to refer to objects of idolatrous worship; but precisely what objects remains in some doubt. Gesenius maintains that Gad represents the planet Jupiter which was worshiped as the greater god of Fortune; while Meni represents Venus, the lesser goddess of Fortune. The etymology of the two words favors the sense for

each of *destiny*, future good or ill, supposed to be apportioned to men by the Fates.—Tables were spread and loaded before these idols to their honor. Jeremiah refers to this usage (44 : 17–19,) and Ezekiel also (23 : 41.)—It must be grievously offensive to God to have those agencies of his universal providence by which he determines the good or ill of human life, ascribed to the planets or to any imaginary gods. Such idolaters practically denied his existence and set up other gods in his stead to do his work and receive the homage due to him alone. Hence he denounces his terrible judgments on these sinners. The terms he uses would remind them of their sin. Ye pour out your drink-offerings to a fancied *Destiny*; I *Destine* you to the sword. Or if the word “Number” were a suitable name for the idol, then the English version, “I will *number* you to the sword,” would associate the judgment with the sin after the manner of the Hebrew words.—The great sin, represented under the conception of idolatry, seems to be brought out in literal phrase in the last clause of v. 12; “When I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear.” No calls from God availed toward reclaiming them to himself. Their depravity baffled every moral endeavor to save them.

13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

Still addressing the ungodly portion of the Jews and speaking of the pious portion as his servants and his chosen, the Lord draws the contrast between them. Most remarkably was this fulfilled when the day of retribution came upon the guilty nation, and the Roman arms, coupled with their own mad infatuation, made Jerusalem a city of horrors. Never were greater calamities poured forth on any doomed city. But precisely then there was great joy in those communities where the gospel was shedding forth its blessings and men were turning to the Lord.—In the last clause, the marginal reading, “breaking” instead of “vexation,” gives more correctly the sense of the original. They should howl of broken-heartedness, the utter crushing out of all hope.—No description could be more true to facts. The scenes of the fall of Jerusalem as described by Josephus are a forcible comment on these verses.—The other side of the picture may be seen in the former portion of the Acts of the Apostles; “Did eat their meat with gladness” (Acts 2 : 46), [the

wicked Jews perished by thousands of starvation]. "There was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8); but in doomed Jerusalem were scenes of unutterable anguish and horror. In one short verse, Peter paints the Christian side of the picture; "Whom not having seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, *ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*" (1 Peter 1:8). The records of history delineate for the other side a grouping of miseries rarely if ever surpassed; seditions, anarchy, famine, conflagration, carnage, crucifixion, till within that one doomed city more than eleven hundred thousand perished.

15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

16. That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

A name "left for a curse," is not precisely left to *be cursed*, but left to be *cursed by*—left to be used in the imprecation of the worst possible doom, *e. g.*, as if one were to say of any guilty city, The Lord make thee as Sodom: The Lord make thee as Jerusalem, smitten of God for her sins! A case of the same sort appears in Jer. 29:22, "Of them shall be taken up a curse by all the Jewish captives in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."—The converse of this, a name to bless by, appears in Gen. 48:20: "By thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh."—"Calling his servants by another name" is a case of remarkably specific prophecy and fulfillment. Whereas God's servants had been called Israelites and Jews, they shall henceforth be called Christians. In fact the latter entirely superseded the former, and the two names for many centuries became virtually antithetic, with no common sympathy—the name Jew having entirely ceased to represent the people of God. To each party, Jew and Christian, the name of the other became naturally odious, so that no Jew would allow himself to be called a Christian, and no Christian would accept the name Jew as representing his religious character and relations. In all human languages, the recognized people of God are known by the new name Christian, and no more by the old name, Jew.—In v. 16, the first Hebrew word is the usual relative, *which*. I accept the opinion of Alexander that it refers to "name" and should be read, "By which [name] he who

blesses himself in the land blesses himself in the God of truth." It should be borne in mind that this name is "Christian," and the allusion therefore is to the name of Christ.—There is still a question as to the precise significance of "blessing one's self." The choice lies between pronouncing one's self blessed, and invoking blessings on one's self in prayer; the former having in its favor its close relation antithetically to a name to *curse* by in the previous verse; while the latter is favored by its easy reference to prayer in the name of Christ. This distinction need not be pressed however since neither can well exclude the sense of the other. In fact, God's people bearing the new name "Christian" have in it a name both to bless by and to use in prayer.—This name moreover is essentially identical with the name of the God of truth, *i. e.*, the God of intrinsic eternal veracity and faithfulness in promise. It is noticeable that the Hebrew word used here for "truth" is *Amen*, a name specially applied to Jesus Christ (Rev. 3 : 14), "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." The Revelator seems to allude to this very passage in Isaiah.—As here spoken of, "he that sweareth in the earth" [better, the *land*] uses the divine name in the solemn oath; not profanely.—In the reason assigned, "Because the former *troubles* are forgotten, etc., the word for "troubles" manifestly means *sins*; the sins, hostilities or enmities of the people toward God. The same word occurs (63 : 9) in the sense of enmities, provocations. See notes on that passage. That God forgets them implies that they are fully and freely forgiven; put away from his thought and hidden from his eye. This fact of so free and full pardon is adduced here to prove him a *faithful* God. Having promised to forgive the penitent, he surely does it, being indeed a God of truth.—This verse is doubly important because of its close logical relation to the verse that follows and to its peculiarly interesting statements. The reader will therefore take special note that vs. 15, 16 bring us into the very center and heart of the Christian system, Christ giving his name to his people to wear ["Christian"], and then his own name also to offer prayer in and to bless themselves by; and further, this name is said to be identical, at least in significancy, with that of the "God of truth." Then the special point in which Christ proves himself true is the certainty of pardon to the penitent. He is surely a God of truth because he has fully put away all the former sins of his people, and has hidden them forever from his eye.—Now comparing this gospel system with the distinctive features of the Mosaic, and much more still, with the historic life of the Jewish nation (viewed morally), the contrast is very great. It opens to view a new spiritual world. This is precisely what the Lord through his prophet proceeds to say.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

“For, behold,” I make a wondrous change. I contemplate nothing less, I do nothing less than what might be called, building a new world.—The words, “for, behold,” resume, and restate the main facts of the previous verse in a more broad and general form, and call special attention.—The reader does not need the suggestion that the great question of interpretation here is whether this language describes a *physical* “new heavens and earth,” or only a *moral* one. Let the eye be kept on this point as we proceed. At this stage, it should be noticed that the previous context treats of *moral* work and *moral* results only. It is precisely the great revolution wrought by the gospel in bringing human hearts back to God; securing for them full pardon; and opening the door for all blessings ever needed, obtainable in the name of Christ.—But the next verse is God’s own explanation of what he means by creating new heavens and earth. The last clause in v. 17 affirms that the new will so entirely eclipse and supersede the old as to expel it from thought and memory.

18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

This calls upon the Christian world to rejoice exceedingly in what God is doing; not in what he *will* do in some remote age, say at the end of the world; but what he is to do at the time which stands before the prophet’s mind as the present, the same time to which the previous context refers. The Hebrew verbs rendered “create” are in both cases the participle, which is precisely the Hebrew present tense, *I am creating*.—But *what* is he creating?—Very kindly and wisely he explains his meaning. He says, “I am creating Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;” which can mean only that God will make his Zion a fountain of blessedness to himself and an occasion therefore of rich joy to others.—The thought is still farther expanded, the Lord declaring, “I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people,” divinely happy in such results; and she shall be sad no more. The usual indications of sadness and grief, the voice of weeping and crying, shall be heard in her no more.—We may fitly pause here to apply these declarations to the question at issue between the material and the spiritual

sense of the new heavens and new earth. In which does God most rejoice; in matter or in mind? in new and finely embellished planets, suns and systems, of purely material character; or in intelligent minds, renewed by grace, won from pollution to purity; turned from rebellion to willing homage; changed from enmity to love? In which should the universe most rejoice? When we narrow down the question to the choice between the sensual and the spiritual as a ground for infinite joy to God or as a source of joy to his people, can any further doubt remain?—But the argument from the previous context is not exhausted. The spiritual sense of the new heavens and earth is supported not only by vs. 15, 16, as already shown, but by the scope of the whole chapter which unquestionably treats of the great moral and spiritual changes attendant upon the first advent of the Messiah, viz., the calling of the Gentiles; the conversion to Christ of a remnant of the Jews, and the utter apostasy and ruin of the remaining masses, coupled with the glories of the new Zion as a world of spiritual life, light, and joy.—We may go back yet farther and maintain that the one great central theme throughout these later prophecies of Isaiah (chaps. 40–66) is essentially the same; those great events and truths which cluster round the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian economy, involving a prophetic outlook onward upon the grand comprehensive results of the latter period. Hence in harmony with this great purpose and drift of these later prophecies, these declarations; “I am creating new heavens and a new earth,” should certainly be construed to refer to this same stupendous spiritual and moral change and not to any supposed material change to take place after the close of the gospel age and of the present earthly state.—Still further; precisely this figure of new heavens and earth to represent the new features of the Christian age has occurred already in this portion of Isaiah (chap. 51: 16); “I have put my words in thy mouth and have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, *that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth*, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.” Giving to his people new revelations of his truth and new demonstrations of his spiritual protection are legitimate preliminary agencies for introducing the Christian dispensation; but can have no possible relevance as preliminary agencies for building a new material universe. Giving his people truth to preach, and bidding them go out into all the world and preach it, saying to them, “Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world,” were in fact precisely the Christian agencies with which Jesus Christ inaugurated his gospel kingdom. The reader will notice that these are the very points of this passage (Isaiah 51: 16), only translating the poetic language and figures of Isaiah into the prosaic style of the gospel history in the New Testa-



ment. Hence we must identify the new heavens and new earth with the gospel dispensation.—With this view accords the language of Paul (2 Cor. 5 : 17), “If any man be in Christ, there *is a new creation* (Greek); old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”—Here essentially the same figure, a new creation, is applied to the spiritual change wrought in every individual conversion which Isaiah applies to the new forms of spiritual power in which the gospel age pre-eminently surpasses the Mosaic.

20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner *being* a hundred years old shall be accursed.

According to the sentiment of the earlier ages, length of days was the gift of wisdom (Prov. 3 : 16), one of God’s best gifts to man. Hence great longevity appears here as one symbol of the blessedness of the better times of the gospel reign. The points in the subsequent description, houses, vineyards, the quiet enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor—being figures and symbols of far better spiritual things, it is altogether in harmony with the context to explain this reference to longevity in the same way.—“Thence,” refers naturally to space and not to time, so that the passage legitimately means; “No more shall be borne from thence” [to the grave] “an infant of few days, or an old man who has not filled his days.” On this construction the sense corresponds with the parallel clause, “For the child shall die an hundred years old.” His youthful vigor will hold out one hundred years. The word for “child” means more properly a youth; often a young man; *e. g.*, Gen. 34 : 19, and 41 : 12, and 1 Kings 3 : 7, and Jer. 1 : 6.—But ungodly men make nothing by long life. Sinning against gospel light, length of years is to them only a curse. Perhaps the sense is that under this ideal conception in which longevity is the common law of human life, none but the righteous can derive substantial good from it—sinners being cut off by God’s special curse so as not to live out half their days. Compare Ps. 55 : 23.—In the future Millennial age when the laws of human life will be far better understood than ever before, and *far more conscientiously obeyed*, there is no doubt that the physical system of the race will acquire more vigor, so that health will be the common law, and longevity will become both a common fact and a real blessing. Yet it is very questionable whether this passage refers primarily to these physical changes. The leading thought in the passage is plainly of spiritual blessedness. In the words of Dr. Alexander, “Premature death, and even



death in a moderate old age, shall be unknown. He who dies an hundred years old shall be regarded either as dying in childhood, or as cut off by a special malediction. The whole is a highly poetical description of longevity, to be explained precisely like the promise of new heavens and a new earth in v. 17."

21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

These promises stand over against the threatenings denounced upon sin in the Mosaic law, borrowing their forms from those maledictions. See Lev. 26 : 16, and Deut. 28 : 30, 39. "Ye shall sow your seed in vain; for your enemies shall eat it." "Thou shalt build a house and not dwell therein," etc. Gospel promises appear under similar phrase, in Amos 9 : 13-15. —By a strong but pertinent figure, the longevity of men is compared to that of a tree, some varieties of which would outlive the antediluvians. Their years counted by the annual accretions overrun one thousand.—The verb translated, "long enjoy," means properly, *shall wear out*. They shall use the work of their hands till its use shall be thoroughly exhausted. All these blessings come of their being the objects of God's special favor. Whom the Lord blesses is blessed indeed.

24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

A more precise translation of this verse is, "And it shall be that they shall not yet have called, and I will answer; they shall be yet speaking, and I will hear." The words need not be pressed to the extreme of meaning that prayer is superseded so that blessings come before and without prayer. The passage is rather designed to put in strong form God's infinite readiness to hear prayer, and the peculiarly intimate and endearing relations existing between himself and his praying people. They have only to make their wants known; while they are yet speaking he hears and the thing is done. There is no experience of long

delay, of agonizing supplication long protracted, and all response from God long deferred. Such experiences have been the fruit of sin; delay on God's part being therefore demanded as discipline for an unhumiliated heart, or as means for correcting a wayward life. When his people shall come to live very near to him and to walk softly before him, on terms of true Christian intimacy and in the warmth of sanctified affection, prayer will be with them as their breath, and God's answer will be the quick response of a loving Father's heart.

25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

With the exception of the middle clause, this verse is an abridgment of the passage in chap. 11: 6-9, and must receive the same interpretation. See notes on that passage.—This verse, linking so closely the state here described to that described in Isaiah 11, is conclusive proof that this, like that, refers throughout to the gospel age, and not to a paradisaical state after the close of the gospel age.—The clause, "Dust shall be serpent's meat," refers to the curse pronounced on the serpent (Gen. 3: 14). "Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."—But of course the serpent here is not the crawling reptile, literally understood, but is the Satan who assumed his guise that he might gain the ear and the heart of Eve, and who consequently received his curse in terms borrowed from the mask he wore. John the Revelator takes special pains to identify this crafty (shall we say, slippery) personage who is so wont to steal some other livery in which to prosecute his malign schemes. "The great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12: 9). John thought of the cunning art of Satan in concealing his person under the guise of a serpent, and therefore sought to tear off his mask. Paul also alludes to the same primal curse, ostensibly upon the serpent, but really upon Satan, when he said, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16: 20). This is his paraphrase of the promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it [her seed] shall bruise thy head," the head of the serpent.—To the same purport the prophet here says, Satan shall meet his threatened doom, the dust of the earth his meat. He shall "bite the dust." In the phrase of the author of Ps. 72: 9, "his" [the Messiah's] "enemies shall lick the dust," trodden beneath his triumphant feet. The great protevangelium [first gospel promise] shall be illustriously fulfilled.—The Revelator expands the same essential thought in Rev. 20: 1-3, "I saw an angel

come down from heaven having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years," etc.—Thus all these inspired men; Isaiah, John and Paul, see the real Satan under the cover of the serpent in the scenes of Eden, and they mark him as the chief antagonist of King Messiah. It should excite no surprise that he attempts to conceal himself under a form not his own; for is he not always a deceiver and a liar from the beginning? It would be a far greater marvel if he were ever seen in his own legitimate character.—Thus King Messiah conquers; his empire of truth moves on with glory and majesty; his great enemy falls smitten, humbled, despoiled before him; and peace, purity, and blessedness pervade the earth.



## CHAPTER LXVI.

As to its course of thought, this concluding chapter is remarkably in harmony with the general scope of the later prophecies (chaps. 40–66), and especially so with the portion (chaps. 49–65), all its topics clustering round the transition point from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation as their natural center. Here is the temple made with hands, giving place to the spiritual temple—every living Christian's heart (vs. 1, 2); ritual sacrifices no longer required but henceforth abominable (v. 3); retribution upon men who choose their own ways of worship and of life, and not God's (vs. 3, 4); the believing and humble remnant of the ancient people, scorned and outcast by their brethren, but beloved of God (v. 5); retribution upon their enemies (v. 6). The true Zion, almost without travail pains, gives birth to the gospel church and the new glories of Christ's kingdom (vs. 7–9); in which all Zion's true friends may well rejoice exceedingly, for her consolations in the accession of the Gentiles will be great and enduring (vs. 10–14). The Lord's hand uplifted to bless Zion reveals itself also in judgment on her foes (vs. 15–17). Again the prophet recurs to the spread of the gospel far abroad and to the new constitution of the gospel kingdom (vs. 18–23), but closes (v. 24) with the hopeless doom of God's persistent enemies.

1. Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house

that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

The question, "*Where* is the house [temple] that ye build for me," asks not so much for its locality, [*Where* does it stand?] as for its quality; *What* house; what temple worthy of my infinite greatness and glory, can ye ever build for me? The original equally justifies this sense and the scope of thought in the passage requires it. All critics agree that the language disapproves the work of building a temple for the great God. This is the natural import of the question, and is confirmed by the context in which God first declares that instead of dwelling any more in earthly temples, he dwells with the humble, contrite heart (v. 2), and in which (v. 3) he expresses his abhorrence henceforth of animal sacrifices, without which there would be no earthly temple.—It is remarkable that the prophetic eye, resting upon the covenant people at the era of Messiah's advent and earthly life, saw them rebuilding his earthly temple. It was the great religious enterprise of that age. At the date when our Lord entered upon his public ministry, it had been forty-six years in building (John 2: 19, 20). It was manifestly regarded by them as a model of magnificence and glory, destined to stand for ages, the pride of the city and nation. So it seemed to the disciples (Matt. 24: 1. Mark 13: 1, and Luke 21: 5).—But God had other thoughts. The time for change had come, and earthly temples must go down. They had their mission to fulfill under the old economy, although even there the presence of an earthly temple as the special abode of the Infinite God was not without spiritual dangers in the line of temptation to low and material views of Jehovah. Solomon expressed the true and morally grand conception that God is too great to be compressed and imprisoned within walls of wood and stone; "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens can not contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8: 27). Stephen before the Jewish council (Acts 7: 48) and Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17: 24) grasped the same grand view which appears in our text: "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." "God who made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."—"The place of my rest," abode, is equivalent to a permanent home. This phrase was in current use for the temple. See 1 Chron. 28: 2. "I [David] had in my heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God," etc. See also 2 Chron. 6: 41. Ps. 132: 8, 14.

2. For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all *those things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man*

will I look, *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

The second clause, "all those things have been," fails to give the precise shade of thought which is not by any means that they *have been* at some former time in a higher or other sense than they are now. Understanding by "all those things," the heavens and the earth—i. e., the created universe, the Lord in this verse declares, My hand made them all, and so, consequently, *they came into being*. They all owe their existence wholly and exclusively to my creative hand. In the sublime language of the Psalmist, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake and it was; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33: 6, 9).—Yet though I have built this beautiful earth, and those more grandly magnificent heavens, and though no earthly temple, however vast in its proportions and however gorgeous in its adornments, is worthy to be my abode; yet to this man will I look with special regard, even to him who is truly humble, contrite of heart for sin, responding quick and earnestly to the voice of my word. Tremulous, ever wakeful solicitude to know and do God's revealed will, seems to be the precise idea of the original words for "trembleth at my word."—A similar view of God's special interest in the humble contrite soul appears in chap. 57: 15. Analogous expressions occur in Ps. 34: 18, and 138: 6, and 51: 17.—These testimonies from God as to the state of mind that pleases him are of priceless value to men, none of whom should ever have a higher aspiration than that of pleasing God and securing his favor and his indwelling presence.—In their general scope these two verses bear a striking analogy to the views presented by our divine Lord in his conversation with the woman of Samaria (John 4: 21–24). *There*, worship no longer restricted to Jerusalem, but offered in spirit and in truth to God as a Spirit in every place, for the Father seeketh such to worship him: *Here*, no more worship in temples made with hands; but the Great God looking with sympathy and love on every contrite, humble worshiper, reverently obedient to his word. No doubt can remain that each passage contemplates the same great change of dispensation; the same grand doctrine respecting God's spiritual communion with his people in the gospel age.

3. He that killeth an ox is *as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if* he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

The first complete sentence in this verse, closing with "idol,"

is a remarkable specimen of concise and abrupt Hebrew. "Slaughtering the ox; smiting a man; sacrificing the sheep; breaking the neck of a dog; offering an oblation—blood of swine; making a memorial of incense; blessing an idol." The first item in each of these four pairs of acts is a ritual service required under the Mosaic law: the second corresponding one is a thing forbidden by that law and abominable. Slaying the ox and the sheep, offering oblation and incense, were, according to that system, all right; but smiting a man was all wrong; so also, breaking a dog's neck, offering swine's blood; blessing an idol. Manifestly these acts, so entirely contrasted in the point of right and wrong under the Mosaic law, are here grouped together as all wrong—all essentially alike before God, and all *abhorred*. That is, the Lord intends to say here that the Mosaic ritual is no longer obligatory, but is indeed repulsive to him, and therefore must be abolished at once and forever. No qualifying terms are appended to this declaration, as, e. g., that the Mosaic sacrifices are loathsome *except* when offered reverently or sincerely. There is no intimation that the reason why God rejects them lies in the spirit of the man who brings them. The form of statement strongly implies the utter discontinuance of the entire sacrificial system. It goes down together with the material temple, both having done their work; each having its inherent liabilities to evil; each therefore is promptly set aside when in the fullness of time the world was ripe for the better dispensation.—The last part of this verse is in the same strain of language and of thought with v. 4.

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

Because *they* on their part have chosen their own ways, choosing to persist in the Mosaic rites of worship after I had abolished them, and delighting in things which were to me an abomination; so also I on my part will choose and appoint for them  *vexations* (rather than precisely "delusions"), and the things they fear, I will bring upon them.—Their persistent adherence to the Mosaic ritual and their scornful rejection of a spiritual (not carnal) Messiah and of his gospel, had not been done ignorantly, and without ample light as to God's will, for through long ages God had called them by his prophets and they would not hear. See chap. 65: 12, and notes there.

5. Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

These wicked Jews appear now as persecutors of the few out of their nation who had espoused the name of Christ. The latter are addressed; "Ye that reverence God's word; your brethren" [of the Jews] "who have hated you" (the New Testament shows how bitterly) "and have cast you out" (of their synagogues and communion) "for my name's sake, have said" (as men who assume to be very religious and to have God on their side in these malignant persecutions); "God will be glorified." They claimed to think that in persecuting the followers of Christ they were doing God service and promoting his glory. They also say in bitter irony, "We shall look upon your joy!" A good time you will have of it in forsaking the religion of your fathers! We shall see how much you will gain by your treachery and apostasy from the God of Abraham! "But they shall be confounded."——This translation which I have assumed to be ironical, "We shall look upon your joy;" follows closely the grammatical structure and usage of the Hebrew words. The description which it gives of the carnal, bigoted, persecuting Jews of the early Christian age is wonderfully true to history.

6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompense to his enemies.

The word for "noise," by usage means the sound of war; the shock of battle; the roar of armies rushing to the deadly conflict. The meaning here is that God is heard going forth from his city and temple to visit fearful retribution on the guilty Jews, his enemies. It can scarcely be doubted that the passage refers specially to the Roman armies, sent of God in his providence to destroy the doomed city and people.

7. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb*? saith thy God.

The figure developed here needs little explanation. This passage corresponds substantially in thought with chap. 49: 18–23, saving that Zion there is assumed to be the joyful mother of countless hosts of Gentile children; while here, the whole ingathering of the gospel age, the entire results of preaching the gospel to the wide world, are thought of collectively as one male child. Then

slightly varying the figure, the Lord asks, "Shall a land"—a new and gospel Canaan—"be brought forth in one day?" "Shall a nation be born with but one birth-pang?" These two questions are essentially parallel, the word rendered "earth" being used here (as often) for *land* with reference to the land of promise, and thought of moreover, not as itself bringing forth, but as being brought forth. Shall a new Zion be born in a day?—Zion here represents the true church. Under the figure of a natural birth, almost painless—altogether, purely, and gloriously joyful in its results—Zion travaileth, and lo! a new and far more glorious Zion is born!—Hath the like been ever heard of before—a nation born with one birth-pang? for ere Zion had travailed, she brought forth her children! Yet this is only what should be expected from the glorious God! Would he not most assuredly finish what he had begun, and carry through to a full and sublime success what his own wisdom and love had planned and predicted? Does he ever breathe upon the hearts of his people the spirit of agonizing, believing prayer, and then refuse to hear and answer? Does he beget sweet hopes in their bosom only to blast them utterly, painfully, ruinously, and forever? Does he lead them on to patient labor and earnest endeavor, only to crown their toil with disappointment and bitter frustration? Are the glorious promises that Jesus Messiah shall gather the nations to his standard and bless them with his grace, given only to tantalize the hopes of his people, and wring their hearts with the sorrow and crimson their cheek with the shame of disappointment in the end?—These points are all involved in principle under the figures that appear in v. 9. Ought not such words as these to be a panacea for all doubting; a specific against all unbelief? Are these the words of the blessed God, and yet shall his people be slow of heart to trust his words of promise and to confide in his deep undying love?—Essentially the same figure though modified in its application appears in Rev. 12—the woman clothed with the sun, giving birth to a man-child who was to rule the nations. The Revelator seems to have borrowed this figure from Isaiah, to use for his own purpose.

10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

Jerusalem is now a happy mother rejoicing that a son is born to her—a birth which really means a nation (v. 8)—a new and world-embracing Zion. Now therefore let her friends gather round her with their hearts of glowing sympathy and words of grateful



cheer. Let those who have wept in her grief, rejoice in her joy. Remarkably these rejoicing friends are accounted as among her infant children, still clinging to a dear mother's bosom to feast there at the *full breasts* of her glory. The word of rare occurrence, translated "*abundance*," is thus given by Gesenius. The ineffable richness and excellence of the gospel is the fountain of all their joy.

12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees.

Her peace in the sense of spiritual prosperity shall be with the deep and mighty flow of a great *river*, this Hebrew word being used for the largest class of rivers, and often specially for the Euphrates, the prince of oriental rivers.—The "flowing stream" should rather be, *overflowing*; one which in its freshets breaks over all its banks. The conversion and ingathering of the Gentiles will be on no stinted scale, but with mighty sweep and magnificent results.—The incoming Gentiles seem here to be incorporated into the Zion-family and welcomed to the full breasts of this prolific and rejoicing mother of nations.

13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

The Hebrew reads, "As a *man*" (not merely as "one") "whom his mother comforteth;" as if the divine speaker would honor the idea of a mother comforting her son even in his mature years, and of a son enjoying such comfort none the less for his years of manhood. Observe the oriental spirit in this particular as seen in the case of Solomon and Bathsheba (1 Kings 2: 19, 20), and in the case of Jacob and Rebekah his mother (Gen. 27).

14. And when ye see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and *his* indignation toward his enemies.

The figure, "Your bones," etc., is strong. Literally, "shall sprout, shooting forth like a vigorous root, full of vitality. The orientals often allude to the bones as the seat of vitality, their marrow being significant of strength and real life. Probably they knew the physiological fact that joy of heart promotes the healing of broken bones, quickening their vitality. This doctrine appears in the proverbs of the nation, *e. g.*, Prov. 3: 8, and 14: 30, and 16: 24, and 17: 22.—Hence let the friends of God exult in his munificent blessings on Zion.—The last half of the verse puts in

vivid contrast the revealings of God's power for salvation to his friends and destruction upon his enemies. "The hand of the Lord made known" for good is a revelation of his power to save. The last clause should be translated, "But he is *indignant* toward his enemies," the original word being a verb and not a noun. —At this point the discourse turns to speak of God's indignation against the wicked and its fruits in righteous retribution.

15. For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

16. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

Fire is the usual symbol of divine judgments on wicked nations in this world, as well as upon all the wicked in the world to come. —"Chariots" conceive of him as a mighty warrior, going forth to battle with the most terrible enginery of destruction known to ancient warfare. —The word translated "render" means primarily, to *turn back*; and here probably in the sense of *appease*; to satisfy by the infliction of due punishment. God's infinite sense of justice can never be answered as toward the incorrigible despisers of his mercy, save by condign judgments. —"Plead with all flesh," not with the logic of speech and persuasion, but with the more terrific pleadings of sword and fire. The word legitimately signifies a controversy, a struggle; and may take the strong sense, as here, of collision with sword and flame and all the enginery of ruin. —The question, *When* shall these judgments fall on the wicked? may fitly be answered as a similar one put by his disciples [Matt. 24: 3] was answered by our Lord (v. 28); "Where-soever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." It will not be all exhausted at any one time. Very probably its primary reference is to the ruin that fell on the apostate Jewish nation. Yet nothing forbids that further and far more general and terrible installments may yet remain. As the glorious things promised to Zion are general and comprehend in the sweep of their view the entire gospel age of the world; so by analogy we should infer that the judgments threatened upon the wicked are correlated with them as to time, and are therefore general in their reference. That they take a wide range is indicated by this language, "Plead with *all flesh*." God is indignant toward his enemies, all of them (v. 14). —It is far more vital to us to fear before him and flee from this wrath to come than to know precisely *when* it will break forth. It will doubtless be at such an hour as the wicked think not; so let them desist from their wicked ways and provoke the wrath of the Almighty no longer!

17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eat-

ing swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

The class primarily described here must be identical with those who appear in chap. 65: 3, 4, *i. e.*, the unbelieving, apostate Jews whose wickedness is described in terms borrowed from the odious idol worship of the prophet's own time. It will be noticed that these descriptions have in common the following points, *viz.*; The sacrificing in gardens; the eating of swine's flesh and of things abominable. And these are the leading points made in each description.—The precise customs alluded to and indeed the precise sense of the Hebrew words in this passage, have been much discussed, yet without entire unanimity in the results.—“Sanctify and purify themselves,” were idolatrous, not sacred, rites—preparatory to idol worship, and not to the worship of the true God.—“*In the gardens*,” should rather be “*for*,” or in reference to, the gardens where those rites were performed.—There is nothing to sustain the sense “*tree*.” The meaning probably is, *after one*, *i. e.*, one file leader.—“*In the midst*,” in the procession or throng. The same Hebrew word is used for a procession in Gen. 42: 5, and Ps. 68: 25, translated, “among those,” or “them.”—“The abomination,” is supposed by Dr. Alexander to be not general but specific, like the terms before and after it. He translates it, “vermin.” There was nothing too mean to be an object of idolatrous reverence. No doubt Satan gloats over his success in making wicked men stultify and debase themselves to the worship of reptiles and vermin. Is it not Satanic in him to put his minions to such abject service?

18. For I *know* their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

The original of the first clause is exceedingly abrupt and elliptical, indicating the speaker's intense emotion. The pronoun *I* is expressed in Hebrew and therefore emphatic. “But *I*—their work and their devices!” “It shall come to pass, even to gather all nations and tongues;—and they shall come and see my glory,” *i. e.*, the manifestations of my power and justice in retribution on my enemies; also of my power and mercy in gathering converts to my Zion. In supplying the ellipsis in the first clause, it seems better, more in accordance with the usage of Isaiah, to bring forward the verb “consume” or destroy from the previous verse, than to take up the verb “know.” This latter seems tame. If any verb is to be supplied arbitrarily, *abhor* is most appropriate to the course of thought and feeling.—The things which the Lord will do—thus aroused by horrible wickedness—and which are expressed here as “gathering all the nations to come and behold his glory,” must naturally include the two grand events brought forward in

the verses that follow; viz., to see his glory in converting the Gentiles and in perpetuating and adorning his own Zion, on the one hand (vs. 19–23); and on the other, to see his glory in the exemplary and eternal punishment of his irreclaimable enemies (v. 24).

19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.*

This “sign” is not the “ensign” of chap. 11: 12, the central and rallying flag, around which the coming hosts from Gentile lands might gather. The original word is not the same here as there. This is the usual word for miracles, considered as witnessing facts, testifying to the divine mission of those who perform them. It is so used (Ex. 10: 1, 2) of the miracles wrought there to sustain the divine mission of Moses. The corresponding Greek word is used in the same way by the apostles in the Christian age. See Mark 16: 17. 2 Cor. 12: 12, and Heb. 2: 4. It is therefore entirely in harmony both with the usage of this word and with the scope of this chapter to apply it here to those miraculous manifestations of the Holy Ghost in physical miracles, *e. g.*, speaking with other tongues, by which God indorsed the commission of his apostles when he sent them forth into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. All these, it may fitly be remembered, were “*escaped*” Jews who, turning to the Lord, had saved themselves from “this untoward generation” (Acts 2: 40).—The nations designated here are named as specimens, and not by any means exhaustively. That they are mostly very remote and some of them almost unknown, was no doubt intended to indicate the unlimited range of this commission—“into all the world”—“to every creature;” and indeed to signify the actual extent to which the gospel should be preached. Tarshish carries the mind to South-western Europe; Pul and Lud, to Africa, where Lud is manifestly located by Jeremiah (46: 9); Tubal to Northern Asia (Ezek. 27: 13, and 32: 26, and 38: 2, 3, and 39: 1). Javan is the Hebrew word for Greece. The “isles afar off”—all the distant countries beyond sea. In general, all those who had never before “heard *my fame*,” a term which probably means here as in chap. 53: 1, the gospel message, even as “my glory” refers specially to the manifestations of divine mercy in the gospel of salvation. “They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles,” means, shall proclaim my gospel, which pre-eminently manifests God in Christ, “the brightness of the Father’s glory.”—This then is thoroughly a *missionary* prediction. It may have had primary reference to the apostolic age; yet as that was only the beginning of a great work,

the first step toward fulfilling the Savior's one supreme command, we may suppose this prediction to contemplate not only those first missions to the distant nations, but also no less, the missions of our own age and of later ages, until "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord" (Ps. 22: 27), or as another prophet says, until "from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 1: 11).—This verse stands distinguished among Hebrew prophecies in that it drops or rather oversteps the usual restraints of the Jewish costume, and speaks of Christian missionary labors in New Testament and gospel terms. Christ's servants really "go abroad into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature!" The next verse however resumes the usual Hebrew dress. In fact the ancient theocratic system admitted of laboring outward to bring in proselytes—a fact which perhaps underlies the peculiar form of this prophecy.

20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.

The ingathering of Gentile converts is put here naturally in Jewish costume. Under that ancient system, proselytes must needs come up to Jerusalem to worship, and indeed must come there to espouse the name of Jehovah and be formally inducted into the Jewish church. This prophecy pertains to the Christian age. A Jew expresses Christian ideas in Jewish terms and by the aid of Jewish usages.—"All your brethren," are Gentile converts, but they are all brethren in Christ Jesus, for in him there is neither Greek nor Jew; all alike being brethren. The term "brethren" here refers naturally to the foregoing conception of Zion as the common mother of both Jews and Gentiles. See *vs.* 12, 13.—That their brethren are thought of as an "offering unto the Lord," is due to the ritual services of the Mosaic system. The term selected here is the best among a large number of analogous terms because it is never applied to bloody sacrifices, but to peace offerings only.—Essentially the same figure is used of the conversion of the Ethiopians (*chap.* 18: 7). New Testament usage of like sort will be readily recalled, *e. g.*, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (*Rom.* 12: 1).—They are to be brought by all the appropriate means of conveyance then known, which combined ease and rapidity. The word rendered "litter" seems to correspond well to the palanquin of India.—Of course

prophet, writing for the people of his own times, must use terms intelligible to them. The *spirit* of this prophecy authorizes us to substitute for horses and dromedaries, rail cars and steam ships, and also to assume that the transportation will be outward rather inward; missionaries *going forth* into all the world, and not the nations themselves *coming in* to some great central Jerusalem.

21. And I will also take of them for priests *and* for Levites, saith the LORD.

From these Gentile converts shall priests and Levites be taken, showing that they are admitted into the new Zion on an equal footing of honor and responsibility, with Jewish converts. They are to bear their share in the sacred offices of the Christian church as gospel ministers and teachers.

22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

These "new heavens and earth" can be no other than those which are described more fully chap. 65: 17-25, *i. e.*, the new religious constitution; the Christian, Messianic age. As this is to be permanent, so shall Christians themselves as a race, a "seed," a constant succession of fathers and sons, generation after generation, remain before God. The fact brought out in this verse is logically connected with the preceding context, this perpetuity of the Christian Zion and of her people being adduced as a reason for a standing provision of priests and Levites from Gentile as well as from Jewish converts.

23. And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

The costume is still Jewish. Remarkably the prophet does not seem to feel the objection that these stated services were very frequent, considering that the worshipers were to come from the remotest ends of the earth (and on horses, mules, and litters, at that) to worship before the Lord in Jerusalem, for he has designated precisely those which (excepting the daily) occurred most frequently; viz., the Sabbaths and the new moons. The three great yearly festivals were much less frequent; but they are not mentioned. It would seem that he himself could not have thought of their coming up literally to worship God *in Jerusalem*; all flesh; every Sabbath day! The spirit of inspiration could not have meant this, in the literal sense.—But passing beyond costume

and drapery to the real significance, the scene is ineffably magnificent. Assembled millions throng their Christian temples from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship the living God; aye indeed, "*all flesh*" are embraced in this vast promise. Comparing this verse with the next, the conception seems to be that God's enemies are slain and that their carcasses fill the ancient valley of Hinnom, while only God's people survive, and they throng his temple-gates for sacred worship.

24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

"Going forth," is going out from the city of Jerusalem to gain a full and nearer view of the great valley of Hinnom where the slain of the Lord that were "many" (v. 16) were piled in mountain masses, the worms feeding on their carcasses and the fires perpetually burning, yet never utterly consuming them. They are objects of abhorrence to all flesh, impressing a wholesome fear (so the word implies) of the life they lived as leading to and ending in such a death, and a wholesome horror of their sins as richly deserving a doom so fearful.—It can not be doubted that this verse alludes to Tophet as described in this prophet (chap. 30: 33) and yet more fully (Jer. 7: 30-34, and 19: 6-15). To these views of Tophet, the valley of Hinnom, our Lord alludes (Mark 9: 44, 46, 48), drawing from it the very terms in which he describes the scenes of the future punishment of the wicked. So it comes to pass naturally and legitimately that the judgments of God on guilty nations in the present world furnish not only the great principles which underlie all punishment of the wicked, but also the very terms which designate their place of torment, and the illustrations which represent the horrors of their doom.—The central thought here—the worshipers of God going forth from their temples to look upon the carcasses of those transgressors—suggests the experience of the Psalmist (Ps 73: 17, 18), who never comprehended the case of the wicked until in his own words, "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou didst cast them down into destruction."—So ends this wonderful prophetic scene. The kingdom of Messiah triumphant: his foes prostrate to rise no more. The nations gathered by missionary labor come home to the bosom of Zion, and rejoice in her consolations; but God's enemies, balked in every endeavor and meeting their doom of utter discomfiture, are shut up to shame and everlasting contempt—the objects of wholesome abhorrence, impressing on all beholders a salutary fear and dread of sin, and thus conducing to

augment the moral forces which will forever sustain the throne of God and preserve his reverent worshipers in unswerving and ever growing allegiance, homage and love. Such are the grand, momentous results of the gospel scheme in our world—a world fearfully cursed indeed by sin, but more gloriously saved by grace—saved by the Son of God made incarnate to suffer and die, yet raised again to live and reign sublimely victorious in the latter end.

THE END.







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